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UNIVERSITATIS CATHOLICAE AMERICAE
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Vol. 620

SCRIPTORES AETHIOPICI
TOMUS 111

THE GƎʿƎZ ACTS OF ABBA ƎSṬIFANOS OF GʷƎNDAGʷƎNDE

TRANSLATED BY

GETATCHEW HAILE

LOVANII
IN AEDIBUS PEETERS
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THE GE'EZ ACTS OF ABBA ESTIFANOS OF GʷENDAGʷENDE

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ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY*

AÉ = Annales d'Éthiopie.

Arras, *Collectio* = Victor Arras, *Collectio Monastica, CSCO*, vol. 238, script. aeth. t. 45 (1963).

Arras, *Patericon* = Victor Arras, *Patericon Aethiopice, CSCO*, vol. 277, script. aeth. t. 53 (1967).

Basset, *Apocryphes* = René Basset, *Les Apocryphes éthiopiens V. Les prières de la Vierge à Bartos et au Golgotha*, Paris 1895.

Bausi, *Sinodos* = Alessandro Bausi, *Il Sēnodos Etiopico Canoni pseudoapostolici: Canoni dopo l'Ascensione, Canoni di Simone Cananeo, Canoni Apostolici, Lettera di Pietro*, *CSCO*, vol. 552, script. aeth. t. 101 (1995).

Beylot, "Doctrine" = Robert Beylot, "Un épisode de l'histoire ecclésiastique de l'Éthiopie. Le mouvement Stephanite. Essai sur sa chronologie et sa doctrine," *AÉ*, vol. 8 (1970), pp. 103-116.

Budge, *Contendings* = E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Contendings of the Apostles,* vol. I, London 1899.

Caquot, "Ezrā" = André Caquot, "Les Actes d'Ezrā de Gunda-Gundē" *AÉ*, vol. 4 (1961).

Conti Rossini, *Abakerazun* = K. Conti Rossini, *Gadla Abuna Abakerazun seu Acta Sancti Abakerazun*, *CSCO*, vol. 56, script. aeth. t. 25 (1910).

Conti Rossini-Ricci, *Berhān* I; and *Berhān* II = K. Conti Rossini and Lanfranco Ricci, *Il libro della luce del negus Zar'a Yā'qob (Maṣḥafa Berhān),* pt. I, *CSCO*, vol. 250, script aeth, t. 47, (1964); and pt. II, *CSCO*, vol. 261, script. aeth. t. 51 (1965).

CSCO = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.

* Books of the Bible are abbreviated according to the system used in the New Revised Standard Version, New York . Oxford 1989.

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EMML = Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa/Collegeville (Minnesota), manuscripts on microfilm catalogued, in part, by William F. Macomber and Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville,* vol. I-, Collegeville (Minnesota) 1975-.

Ferenc, "Isaïe" = Alexander Ferenc, "Les Actes d'Isaïe de Gunda-Gundē," *AÉ*, vol. 10 (1976).

Getatchew, "Ǝsṭifanosites" = Getatchew Haile, "The Cause of the Ǝsṭifanosites: A Fundamentalist Sect in the Church of Ethiopia," *Paideuma*, vol. 29 (1983), pp. 93-119.

Getatchew, "Sabbath" = Getatchew Haile, "The Forty-Nine Hour Sabbath of the Ethiopian Church," *JSS*, vol. 33/2 (1988), pp. 233-254.

Grébaut, "Les Miracles" = Sylvain Grébaut, "Les Miracles de Jésus," *PO*, vol. XII (1919).

Heldman, "Style" = Marilyn E. Heldman, "An Ewosṭāthian Style and the Gundā Gundē Style in Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Manuscript Illustration," *Proceedings of the First International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art*, London (1989), pp. 1-29 and 135-139.

JES = *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*.

JSS = *Journal of Semitic Studies*.

Koptische Kunst = Catalogue of an exhibition in Villa Hügel, Essen, Germany, titled, *Koptische Kunst. Christentum am Nil*, Villa Hügel, Essen-Bredeney (1963).

Kur, *Samuel* = Stanislas Kur, *Actes de Samuel de Dabra Wagag, CSCO*, vol. 287, script aeth. t. 57 (1968).

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Mordini, "Gunde Gundiè" = Antonio Mordini, "Il Convento di Gunde Gundiè," *RSE*, vol. 12 (1953), pp. 29-70 (+ 31 figures).

Perruchon, *Les Chroniques* = Jules Perruchon, *Les Chroniques de Zar'a Yâ'eqôb et Ba'eda Mâryâm, rois d'Éthiopie de 1434 a 1478*, Paris 1893.

PO = Patrologia Orientalis.

RSE = Rassegna di studi etiopici.

Strelcyn, *Catalogue* = Stefan Strelcyn, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Éthiopiens de l'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei Fonds Conti Rossini et Fonds Caetani 209, 375, 376, 378,* Rome 1976.

Taddesse, *Church and State* = Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, Oxford 1972.

Taddesse, "Stephanite" = Taddesse Tamrat, "Some Notes on the Fifteenth Century Stephanite 'Heresy' in the Ethiopian Church," *RSE*, vol. 22 (1966), pp. 103-115.

Varenbergh, "Studien" = Joseph Varenbergh, " Studien zur abessinischen Reichsordnung (Šer'ata Mengešt"), *ZA*, vol. 30 (1915-16), pp. 1-45.

Wendt, *Milād I*; *Milād II* = Kurt Wendt, *Das Maṣḥafa Milād (Liber Nativitatis) und (Maṣḥafa Sellāsē (Liber Trinitatis) des Kaisers Zar'a Yā'qob*, pt. I, *CSCO*, vol. 221, script. aeth. t. 41, (1962); and pt. II, *CSCO*, vol. 235, script. aeth. t. 43, (1963).

ZA = Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verbandte Gebiete.

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INTRODUCTION

Abunä Ǝsṭifanos (Stephen), the translation of whose *gädl* is presented here, was the initiator of a monastic reform movement that shook the foundations of the establishment of State and Church in Ethiopia in the fifteenth century. According to a document found in the monastery he founded, Däbrä Gärzen/ Gundagunde, in Təgray, Ǝsṭifanos started his movement at the end of the reign of the king whom Emperor Yəsḥaq succeeded in 1413 AD.[1] The name of the king is not mentioned, but the document states that, when *Abunä* Ǝsṭifanos appeared for the first time at court, he found that the monarch, before whom he came to plead his case, had, in the mean time, been overthrown and imprisoned. The country was ruled by one of the noble men, *mäk*^{w}*anənt,* until Yəsḥaq was chosen and crowned.

The reform movement of Ǝsṭifanos and his followers, called Däqiqä Ǝsṭifanos or Ǝsṭifanosites, was known to the local clergy since the reign of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob (1434-1468), basically from the monarch's writings, including some miracles of Mary which he included in the collection of the Blessed Virgin's miracles or *Tä'ammərä Maryam.*[2] The outside world first knew about the Däqiqä Ǝsṭifanos probably from the narratives of the Portuguese embassy to Ethiopia[3] which visited the country during the years 1520-1527. Since then several travelers and scholars have reported on them, notably Antonio Mordini who visited their monastery in 1939 and published his report[4] in 1955. Our knowledge about this fundamentalist group was greatly enriched when K. Conti

[1] Schneider MS 63, ff. 38a-39a. A photographic copy of this manuscript was graciously provided to me by Dr. Robert Beylot. According to this document the king was overthrown and imprisoned. - [2] E.g., ተአምረ ማርያም። በግዕዝ እና በአማርኛ። አዲስ አበባ ፲፱፻፷፩ ዓመተ ምሕረት። pp. 112-117. - [3] See Conti Rossini, *Abakerazun*, p. 2. - [4] *Koptische Kunst*, p. 428 (n. 557); Mordini, "Gunde Gundiè," see especially nos. 103 and 146 on p. 50.

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Rossini published the *Gädlä Abunä Abäkəräzun*[5] in 1910, Kurt Wendt[6] and Conti Rossini and L. Ricci[7] the works of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob in 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1965; André Caquot the *Gädlä Abunä 'Ǝzra*[8] in 1961; Taddesse Tamrat in his study of the movement[9] in 1966; Alexander Ferenc the *Gädlä Abunä Isayəyyas*[10] in 1976; Robert Beylot in his study of their theology[11] in 1970; and Marilyn Heldman in her study of their art[12] in 1970.

The *Gädlä Abunä Ǝsṭifanos* should serve as the first document on the movement. However, since a lot happened to the Ǝsṭifanosites after the death of their founder, the full picture of the group's amazing struggle will be known only when EMML 4, the history of their *səm'* or "martyrdom" is published.[13] The level of torture they suffered by order of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob could be compared to what we read about the martyrdom of the saints of the Church of Diocletian era. The emperor even delivered them to his non-Christian subjects who hated and tortured Christians, by banishing them to regions inhabited by such people. These people took full advantage of the monarch's permission. Nevertheless, the Däqiqä Ǝsṭifanos were able to spread Christianity in some of those regions. In fact, some of the converts joined the monastic community and suffered martyrdom like the rest of their brothers and sisters. It is more than likely that some of the manuscripts coming from Gundagunde, such as EMML 4 and the manuscript Conti Rossini used for his edition of the *Gädlä*

[5] Conti Rossini, *Abakerazun*. - [6] Wendt, *Milād* I; see pp. 13 and 38. - [7] Conti Rossini-Ricci, *Berhān* I, p. 43, and Conti Rossini-Ricci, *Berhān* II, p. 48.
[8] Caquot, "Ezrā," pp. 72-121. - [9] Taddesse, "Stephanite," pp. 103-115. - [10] Ferenc, "Isaïe," pp. 243-294. - [11] Beylot, "Doctrine," pp. 103-116. - [12] Heldman, "Style," pp. 1-29 and 135-139. - [13] Macomber, *A Catalogue*, p. 7.; see also ጌታቸው ኃይሌ÷ ደቂቀ አስጢፋኖስ "በሕግ አምላክ"÷ ኮሌጅቪል (ሚኒሶታ)÷ ፲፱፻፺፯ ዓ. ም., pp. 119-223, and Getatchew, "Ǝsṭifanosites," pp. 93-119. Editing the Gə'əz of EMML 4 will be an enormous task.

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Abunä Abäkəräzun, were copied by the new converts whose mother tongue was neither Amharic nor Təgrəñña.

The basis of their reform movement was that monks should observe strict monastic life, as was laid down by the fathers of monasticism, and that the teachers of the Church should limit the doctrine of Christianity to what is found in "the eighty-one" canonical books of the Bible and the observance of God's Commandments found in them. As they understood it, the main commandment neglected at that time was to worship God alone--the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They considered the *səgdät*, "prostration to the ground," a form of worship that should not be performed in reverence even to the Holy Cross or to the icon of the Madonna and Child, and in honor of and respect for the king and his name.

The tenet that most put them at loggerheads with Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob, however, was their refusal to pay reverence to the king, as the ruler of the country, in accordance with established tradition. They refused to the end to bow down to him when they greeted him or whenever his name was mentioned, as he, like his predecessors, demanded from all his subjects. Zär'a Ya'əqob was angered by their contempt for himself, but he took, as his pretext, the accusation that they had no respect for the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Cross. Indeed, they refused at first to lower their heads also to the Holy Cross and to the icon of the Madonna and Child, but they later accepted the advice of the Metropolitan to prostrate themselves to the Madonna and Child. However, their initial refusal played into the hands of the monastic leaders of the time who were threatened by their reform movement. Thus while fighting with the king, they failed in their call upon the monks and the teachers of the church to go back to the fundamentals of monasticism and Christianity. Instead, the accusation was diverted to their earlier refusal to prostrate themselves before the Holy Cross and the icon of the Madonna and Child.

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Another controversy of the time was the question of millenarian teaching. We learn from the writings of Zär'a Ya'əqob, that the Church taught at that time, as it apparently does even now, that there will be an era when Christ and his saints will reign for a thousand years before the temporal world comes to an end. The literature calls this dogma Däbrä Ṣəyon "Mount Zion", Məsaḥa Däbrä Ṣəyon "the Banquet on/of Mount Zion" and Məsaḥa 'Aśśärtu Mə'ət 'Amät "the Thousand-Year Banquet." We read in one of the miracles of Mary that a church on Mount Zion will be transformed into an ark or a ship and sail off, taking the saints to eternal life. Since nothing special happened at the expected time, which was supposed to have happened when the 7000 years after creation were completed, as happened on Ṗagʷmen 5, 1500 E.C. (August 28, 1508 AD), no fixed time for it is now taught; but the teaching is still honored as preserved in the Church's literature, including the anaphoras and antiphons. The Däqiqä Ǝsṭifanos and other scholars of the time rejected this teaching, maintaining that Däbrä Ṣəyon began with the beginning of Salvation, or the New Testament, for those who follow the teaching of the Gospel, and the banquet is the body of Christ.

A third controversy was related to the nature of the Trinity of God. Are the three persons in the Trinity like one sun, with the disc representing the Father, the light the Son, and the heat the Holy Spirit, or like three suns which together produce one light representing divinity? Although there is Ǝsṭifanos' expose of it in his *gädl*, one cannot obtain a clear picture of his position from it. He speaks of one sun's three features and calls each person "sun." Zär'a Ya'əqob's representation was three suns and one light, accusing the Ǝsṭifanosites of not believing in the existence of three persons in the Trinity.

Furthermore, the Ǝsṭifanosites' story throws new light on the controversial question of observing Saturday. Their documents make it clear that the observance, in Ethiopia, of

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Saturday as the Lord's Sabbath was not a particular tenet of the Däqiqä Ewosṭatewos, as is generally assumed[14] but also of other groups, including the Ǝsṭifanosites. One of the accusations against *Abba* Ǝsṭifanos was that he observed Saturday but not Sunday. He denies the accusation that he abolished the observance of Sunday, but it is true that he observed Saturday as the Sabbath. According to this *gädl*, he, as his customary practice, took Holy Communion on Saturdays (f. 26ab).

We hear little about the activities of the Däqiqä Ǝsṭifanos after Na'od (1494-1508).

The present publication is based on Spencer MS 7 (N), belonging to the New York Public Library (Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation),[15] collated with Conti Rossini MS 24 (R), deposited at the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome,[16] and another manuscript which I designate "S." None of these manuscripts looks to be the autograph, certainly not Conti Rossini's manuscript which was copied for him when he was in Eritrea in. But both N and S, each of which had a different *Vorlage*, are copies at least from the sixteenth century. N has been proof-read and "corrected," apparently in different hands of different centuries. R was copied either from S or its *Vorlage*.[17]

I am grateful to the New York Public Library, Accademia Nazionale de Lincei, and *Qes* Melaku Bawoke for supplying me, respectively, copies of Spencer MS 7, Conti Rossini 24, and S, and for giving me permission to publish the text with my translation. I am indebted to Professor Lanfranco Ricci for helping me in securing a microfilm copy of Conti Rossini 24 from the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, to Dr.

[14] For an excellent presentation of the controversy, see Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State*, chapter VI. - [15] For its description, see *Koptische Kunst*, p. 428 (n. 557). [16] The identification number "24" is taken from Strelcyn, *Catalogue*, p. 88. - [17] The whereabouts of the actual manuscript itself is not known.

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Robert Beylot for providing me a photocopy of Schneider MS 63,[18] to the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library (now Hill Museum & Manuscript Library) for allowing me to use its excellent office facilities and for the help I received from its friendly staff, and to Dr. Anaïs Wion for providing me a digital copy of the *Gädlä Abunä Bärtälomewos*. I thank Professor William. F. Macomber for reading and editing my English translation, Ato Amha Asfaw for formatting this volume following the CSCO requirements and for helping me in preparing the indexes, and Professor Marilyn Heldman for bringing to my attention to the source *Koptische Kunst* where the description of N was published.[19] I am indebted to the authorities of CSCO for accepting the study for their prestigious series. In my translation and my attempt to identify the biblical quotations in the text, I have benefited from the publication of the *Gädlä Abunä Ǝsṭifanos*, published in Ethiopia, in 1996 E.C., by the monastic community of Gundagunde.[20]

[18] See n. 17 above. - [19] See n. 4 above. - [20] ገድለ አቡነ እስጢፋኖስ ዘጉንዳጉንዶ ዘአኅተሞ መምህር ወማኅበር ዘጉንዳጉንዶ ደብረ ገሪዛን ማርያም ገዳም ፲፱፻፺፮ ዓ.ም.

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*In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. * p. 1
The acts and martyrdom of the blessed and holy pillar of faith, lamp of Christians, Father Ǝsṭifanos, wearer of the crown, who finished his race,[1] with victorious strength, in the city of Gʷatr during the reign of Dəbb Ẓär.[2] The crowning of his martyrdom took place on the 18th of the month of Taḫśaś, in the peace of God. May his prayer and blessing be with us forever and ever. Amen.

This man was from a region to the east of the cathedral[3] of Aksum, that is a journey of four (days) from it, from the people of Səbbuḥa. His home was close to Gəfmela; and the ancestral property of his father was (at) Märwa. The name of his father was Bərhanä Mäsqäl; and the name of his mother was Sara. Their family was Christian from their origin. While he was still in the womb of his mother, his father died. When he was born, they named him Ḫädgä Anbäsa. His mother reared him; and he grew up in the home of his father's brother, in a district called Zəqälay. He was a peaceful, uncontentious (child). Rather, he was obedient to his relatives in all that was proper. And if his brothers and friends wronged him, he would not bring it in his misery to the attention of those who could help him. Rather, he would let it pass[4] patiently. He did not desire to play and be noisy like the young. He did not tell on any one to his relatives about what he saw and heard. He was different from his peers; his conduct was rather in goodness and serenity.

Then he became a shepherd. While he was in the wilderness pasturing his sheep, he longed to obtain the grace *that Moses * p. 2
was granted on Mount Sinai when he was herding his sheep.

[1] Cf. 2 Tim. 4:7. - [2] A derogatory name the Ǝsṭifanosites gave to Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob. - [3] Lit. "guardian," i.e. "church" or "cathedral." - [4] Or "he would overlook it."

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This ardor blazed in his heart, not as a passing thought but as a fundamental (resolve) until he should arrive at it, yearning to see God, his creator, to hear his life-giving word, and to serve him according to his law.

After this awakening obsessed him, Wisdom beckoned him (to follow) her path that he might look for a teacher. He went to a (religious) center called Betä Iyyäsus. There he started to learn the Psalms of David. When his brothers heard, they were very angry at his wanting to be a cleric. For they were valiant at fighting with spears and shooting arrows, (wanting) to acquire property[5] from their associates. Him, too, they wanted to draw to their desire. They threatened him angrily, saying, "We will kill you if you do not give up." He did not agree with them.

They left him alone when they failed to lure him. That center was near their land. He devoted himself to learning with eagerness. Whenever they told him a word, he would ask them its meaning. And they admired him for his spiritual search. He was not like the young who (just) learn (by rote) but like a mature person in his progress, in his response, and in his silence.

When the clergy of that center saw the beauty of his deportment, they called his name Ǝsṭifanos. This naming was from the spirit of the Church, in that they gave him the same name as the protomartyr, so that the testimony of his holy striving might be for us associated with that of the former.

After this when he had brought the learning of the law up to the proper level for the liturgy, they took him to the metropolitan in order that he might ordain him deacon. While
* p. 3 *he was at the residence of the metropolitan, the Holy Spirit

[5] Not clear.

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roused him to weigh all his thoughts and to assess his life which he had lived before that time and that after it, and how (and) like whom he should live in the service of God. Then there shone before him the beauty of the acts of the holy Apostles in leaving the world with all that is in it and following the Lord and devoting (oneself) to his life-giving commandments.

Then he prayed to God with fervent tears, saying,

> O Lord, my Lord, I have sought you since my youth. "By you I was strengthened in the womb of my mother. You are (in) my remembrance at all times."[6] You set apart the aim of my will from thoughts of the desire of my relatives. That I sought your law is neither for gain of this world, nor to be praised by men, but to know your will so that I may live according to your good pleasure while you dispose (it) for me. And now, have mercy upon me, O Lord, for you are merciful and compassionate. "Remember not against me all my sins of my youth and my folly; remember me according to your compassion."[7] Count me in the number of your inheritance so that I may carry your good yoke and bear your light burden.[8] Let my life be for the service of your will. Behold, from today on, I have dedicated myself to you. "Strengthen me according to your word. Keep every path of iniquity far from me. Have compassion on me according to your law."[9] "Let my supplication come before you, O Lord."[10] "Give me understanding according to your word(s)."[11] And include me in the seclusion of the blessedness of your holy disciples. Grant me the power of your help so that I may keep my covenant with you, and that my furrow may not deviate from your path; *receive my vow according to your good pleasure. For glory is to you always, forever. Amen. * p. 4

[6] Cf. Ps 70/71:5-6. - [7] Ps 24/25:7. - [8] Cf. Mt 11:30. - [9] Cf. Ps. 118/119:169. - [10] Cf. Ps 118/119:28-29. - [11] Cf. Ps 118/119:170.

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There was a monk priest with him, to whom his relatives had entrusted him. He went to him and confessed all his failings that happened in deed and also in word from the time he was aware (of good and bad) to that day. Then he purified himself with the washing of the Holy Spirit. He readied himself to keep virginity with prudent vigilance, to receive the bridegroom.[12] At that time he was 18 years old. In accordance with the commandment of the holy Torah, which says, "Every one who is registered, from twenty years old (and upward), shall make an offering to God, money of half a shekel,"[13] this blessed one took out what he had, placed his money in the spiritual and testing furnace[14] that was placed at the gate of the church--and, purifying it with the fire of the Holy Spirit, he gave it to the high priest. The latter received it and placed it where it was meet for honor.

At that time Father Bärtälomewos ordained him deacon when he was at his Gärges(s)a residence. Then he went back to his district. His relatives rejoiced at his coming back and at his finding what he had sought. After a short while, the monk took him away (again), having received permission from the brother of his father. They went to a monastery[15] called Bätra. When he arrived there, the blessed one said to the monk, "Father, I want to go to the Monastery of *Abba* Samu'el and exchange greeting(s) with the monks, for I have found a companion who is going there." (The monk) said to him, "That is all right, but hasten the return so that we may go to our district." (The monk) entrusted him to the man who was to go there (with the commitment) that he would not leave him behind when returning.

* p. 5 *Then he went to that monastery named Ḥanbar Godba. The name of its abbot was Samu'el. He was known to all; kings, too, respected him. He greeted him and greeted all the elderly of that monastery. Then the blessed one intimated

[12] Cf. Mt 25:1-12. - [13] Lev 27:2-3. - [14] Cf. Zech 11:13. - [15] The word is *däbr*.

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to the abbot about all his thoughts, that he wanted to be a monk. The abbot said to him, "Your intention is good. May God help you in it." He spent the night there.

Then that man said to him, "Come; let us go." The blessed one said to him, "I do not want to go back there," he said no to him. The man went back, and told him[16] that he refused to come (back) but remained there.

The monk got up and went there; and when he found him, he said to him, "How (is it that) you have treated me thus, so that you escaped from my control? Now, come; let me bring you back to your parents. After that you do whatever you want. But if you remain (here) now like that, they will seek you from me. What would I say to them? Now, do not bring grief upon me, for you know the wrath of your relatives." He wearied him with such words. Also the people of the monastery, including the abbot, helped the monk, for they knew him previously. Crying bitterly, he said to them all right. The blessed one said to the monk, "But swear to me that you will not tell my relatives about this thought of mine which my soul desires." Ḥe swore to him.

Then they went to their district. When they reached there, the monk delivered him to his uncle and to (the rest of) his relatives, saying, "Behold, your son has come to you, but from now on (I am no longer responsible for him), because his heart is far from what you want." Hearing (this), they kept *the blessed one as a prisoner. The saint's uncle was chief over that district and over Gəfmela, the source of their family. He started enticing him by offering money and apportioning his father's inheritance. His brothers, too, were showing him how sweet was the taste of the world in marriage and in having children, wanting to bring down his heart from the strength of his freedom to their slavery, (which is) the servitude to (this) corrupt world. And those who pretended to be his friends

* p. 6

[16] To the monk.

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spoke to him messages of Satan, saying, "We take our pleasure with the wives of our brothers and with others by sleeping with them. How is it that you do not go to the wives of your brothers? And you do not play with your companions for fun? Why do you make your life like that of a fool?"

He, however, was unmoved by all this concern of theirs, which is a swamp of sin. He got strength by touching the fringe of the Lord's garment by which the blood of fornication dries up,[17] and filled himself with the odor of the ointment of his footsteps. He spent that year with them, but without participating in their council. He rather lived armed with weapons to keep his vineyard from all absurdity of the enemy.[18]

Then he got up and went to the place where his mother was; for she was living far from him. After she had reared the saint another man had married her. He went to her to take leave of her in peace.

Then his mother took him aside to a deserted place and said to him, "Tell me your thought, my son, remembering my
* p. 7 womb *and my breasts which reared you. What is this seclusion of yours from your brothers and companions? What is the explanation of your present conduct? Leave me not in deep sorrow unto death. Have mercy on me by telling me what is in your heart."

The saint said to her, "You know that my father died while I was still in your womb. And you, too, left me in my youth. God alone became a father and a mother to me. For every child submits to his begetter. Likewise, I, too, have subjected myself to him who reared me. As for you, calm your heart. From now on, you will not see my face in the flesh. However, devote yourself to God so that he may make prosper your return."

Having heard the finality of his word, she wept bitterly, as mothers weep over their dead children. Having breathed

[17] Cf. Mt 9:20-22; Mk 5:27-29; Lk 8:43-48. - [18] Cf. Song 1:6.

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out her weeping, she sent him off in peace, saying, "May God who called you be your shepherd."

Then he departed, freeing himself from all relationship(s) of the flesh, which are a chaining to the world. He hastened at a run, showing the white of his heel[19] in following the Lord. He came to that monastery which he had visited before. The distance of this monastery from the saint's district was a journey of five (days). When the relatives of the saint missed him, they followed him on foot and came to that monastery. But he hid himself from their face. They labored in searching. When there was nothing they could do, they went back to their district.

The blessed one lived in that monastery in the holy manner of life, that is monasticism, praising God like the angels and in love of labor, void of sloth. He visited *the sick and consoled the elderly, and received blessing from it.[20] He obtained permission before every act that he performed. The people of the monastery marveled at the beauty of his demeanor. He was not like the novices who needed admonition and reproach. To the contrary, his deeds were admonishing them. Nor was he like what they had seen in their own time, but like those in the literature, whose manner of life was outstanding.

* p. 8

Then after a little while, *Abba* Samu'el gave him the holy habit, which is the seal of the vow to live like angels. This is the order of our fathers the holy Apostles and their followers, Anthony and Macarius, father of monks. At that time he was 19 years old. He placed the yoke of Christ on his neck. He took up his light burden, which is a delight for the faithful but a heavy weight for unbelievers.[21]

From that time on, he did not bring into the temple of his body any animal product, which the worldly like. He did not eat meat or butter. He did not drink wine or beer or grape

[19] ? *dəfr*, probably for *ṣəfr*. - [20] RS "them." - [21] Cf. Mt 11:30.

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wine or anything that intoxicates. He preserved his life with bread and water. And even that was to raise high the praise of his Lord. He did not wash his feet to make (them) clean or to give (them) rest. He made himself poor[22] of all possessions, including anything visible, even a rag on which he would sleep, or a bag in which he would keep (things), or a jug with which he would drink, or shoes for his feet, or a cane for his hand. He did not make two garments for changing.

He threw himself into the holy boat, which is the Gospel of the Kingdom. He made it his treasure in order that his heart might be always with it.[23] He was given cowhide
* p. 9 *with which to cover his body. He would spread[24] grass on which he would sleep in his abode. And when he went to church, there was nothing that he would leave in his abode; and there was nothing that he would take with him, but stretch (his hands) out to receive the mystery. Such was his life.

When they assigned him work, be it in the farm fields or at home, he performed it rejoicing at being ordered. If it was so difficult that he could not achieve it, he would not be upset, but would go with hope and would do as much as he could. And when those who worked in the field or in the houses (needed help), they would ask their superiors that they give them him as a help(er), not because of his bodily strength, but because of his obedience without delay. He did not talk with them or with any one else regarding the benefit of this world, neither about clothes nor about food and drink. He did not praise anyone to gain favor nor accuse any one maliciously. Rather, he was always in prayer. When he finished his work, he would remain in seclusion either in his abode or in church.

And in the evening, he went to their meeting, when they beat the sign of gathering, to receive his meal. They, however, made the meal of their meeting meager. Some times they would give a loaf, or half of a loaf. Some times they prepared cooked grain:[25] some times they would give two-

[22] Cf. Mt 10:9-10; 2 Cor 8:9. - [23] Cf. Mt 6:21. - [24] ? *wäṭänä*. - [25] Təgrəňňa, *ṭəqṭəqqo*.

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hands full (of it) and some times one-hand full. But they would prepare their own meals in *their abodes as they wished. As for this saint, he would recline and receive what they gave him once, like the offering (of the Eucharist). Whether he got much or little, he thanked God; he did not complain for depriving him nor join a complainer. He quietly went to his abode and closed his mind up so as not to seek the desire of the flesh. * p. 10

However, the people of his abode ganged up against him[26] because of his not taking part with them. They rebuked him with wrath even to the extent of saying about him that he was from Satan, wanting to disturb his spirit. But he never said anything in response to them. He said, "I was dumb and had humbled myself."[27] Then the saint went to a certain old man who was clothed with labor and was meek. He asked him, saying, "Tell me, father, for the sake of God: is the will of God according to the manners of the people I see or as the books of the Church tell us?" The old man said to him, "As for the people you see, each goes according to his character, in his inability to restrain himself.[28] But God is according to his word(s) which are in the books. Accordingly, it is his pleasure to punish the defeated and reward the victorious."

The saint was glad at this. He prayed constantly, all the time, saying, "Deliver me, Lord, from vain labor, which is not of your good pleasure." He let his soul graze in the Lord's pasture, which is the testimony of the scriptures, and he kept their prescriptions by which he would be saved from the conduct[29] of (sinful) men. The saint inquired of the abbot about anything he would do, and obtained permission. Because of the beauty of his conduct, the abbot used to call the saint, saying "a young elder."

*As for the saint, he afflicted himself with nocturnal vigils, in singing psalms ceaselessly, until his entire body was wasted. The demons urged him further with thoughts, saying, "If you wish to accomplish your desire, lie in your bed, giving * p. 11

[26] Cf. Ps 2:1. - [27] Cf. Ps 38: 3/39:2. - [28] Cf. Isa 53:6. - [29] Or "quarrel."

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up food, pretending to be ill. People then would not know your abstinence." He said no to them, considering the law, that this was not the way of the fathers. When they failed with him in this, they offered him another thought, saying to him, "Come; go out to the wilderness so that you may accomplish your desire. For we cannot confront you here because you are among people. But there, we will see each other face to face." In this, too, he defeated them again, saying, "This should not happen on my own counsel, but by the counsel of the Holy Spirit or by the word of a holy angel, or by the word of the abbot. Otherwise, it is forbidden for me." They were thus defeated. In every way they visited him, they found him ready with a (spiritual) weapon.[30]

Then there happened a vision before the saint, as follows: There was a bird, white in its entirety, but its legs were red. A cat was attacking it, seeking to kill it. Then the saint helped the bird; he picked up a rock and hit the cat. It instantly fell and died, and the bird was saved from the one which was hunting it. Later, the Holy Spirit let him know its interpretation: the bird was the saint's soul, and the cat was the body of flesh. Its attacking of it to kill was the war of the body of flesh with the soul. That the saint picked up a rock and hit it was the holy (monastic) rule and the practice of it. His killing (it) was the subjugation of the flesh. The redness of the bird's legs was his proceeding in the path of martyrdom.

* p. 12 *Then the saint gathered (spiritual) strength by the day by afflicting his soul and subjugating his flesh. He intensified his struggle, ascending on high until he seized its top. He threw himself further into a remarkable vigilance to the extent that he did not give sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids,[31] (to last) until he heard the word and saw the face of the One he sought, without lying on the ground on his side or leaning against a wall, but standing where there was no support other than holding a stick. As a bird stretches out its wings in the air,

[30] Cf. Eph 6:14-16. - [31] Cf. Ps 131/132:4.

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he so stretched out his body where he had no support, until sleep departed from him; and there was no need (of anything) at all. And when he went to church, he stood up straight, as he was accustomed. The entire appearance of his body was changed; his bones dried and his flesh cleaved (to his bones). He became white like the scale of a fish. All parts of his body were softened, such that his odor smelled as though grilled.

People did not know how he treated the parts of his body or about the torment that demons inflicted upon him. They only saw him during the day walking as much as he could. However, they wondered, saying, "How did this happen?" Some say that it was because of lack of food, because they knew about his deprivation, (that) some times he got (a meal) and sometimes he did not. Nevertheless, they did not presume to question him, for his conduct was formidable. He did not talk other than about the benefit of the soul. Some conjectured, saying, "It is because of *a concealed asceticism." They put the case to the saint, saying, "If a man kills himself saying for the sake of God, would it be righteousness for him?" Half of them said, "How can it be righteousness for him when he kills himself?" But the saint did not respond to them. He only admonished his soul, saying, "The Lord has said, 'Whoever finds his soul will lose it. He who loses his soul for my sake will find it.'"[32] And he said to it, furthermore, "Who has called on God and He ignored him? And who has followed him and He has let him down?"[33]

* p. 13

Also many were watching him (to see) if he would be able pass on or retreat. For there were many in that monastery who afflicted their bodies on their own counsel. Therefore, their boat did not arrive at the harbor, because they were not piloted by the Chief Shepherd,[34] and so they were entangled in the world, in the swamp of praise. Him, too, they waited (to

[32] Lit. "Let him who found his soul lose it...," Mt 10:39. - [33] Cf. Sir 2:10-12. - [34] This is either an allusion to 1 Pet 5:4, or *nolot* "sheep" (shepherd) is a misreading of *notya* or *notyawi* "pilot."

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see) if he would be like them because they were not aware that his foundation was on the word of his Lord.

As for the saint, he made no account of his labor that he undertook. Rather, he hastened forward to that which he had not yet attained, seeking delight by receiving the many sufferings of the Lord. Because of much yearning, he even prayed always to the Lord, saying, "Grant me, O Lord, to be sharer in your sufferings. Let the sufferings and tribulations, in which you made your holy disciples share, come upon me.[35] Make not my labor inferior to theirs. Make me partaker with them in the gift of your mercy." He afflicted his soul with such a desire until all the strength of his body was consumed, and was unable to walk. He came to church with difficulty.

While the saint was in this situation, the monks of that monastery went out to the countryside to take care of the fields
* p. 14 staying there, *for it was harvest time. They asked the abbot to give them a teacher who would teach them the Psalms of David. He said to them, "Take Ǝsṭifanos; he will teach you." They took him and brought him there in (a state of) severe exhaustion. They build for him an abode far from them, where it was quiet from the noise of their conversation. It was (in) the path of a cold air (current). The saint lived there in a great conflict that came from the vexation by the demons. Those who were learning were unable to endure so much cold. They said to the saint, "Let us change for you the abode to elsewhere." The saint said to them, "It is better to endure."

Then after that, as they were learning, as they were accustomed, there came a big frightening snake and of terrifying appearance. They undertook to kill it. But they were unable to fight it. It entered the abode of the saint as they watched it. They said to him, "Let us set the house on fire." The saint prevented them. They said to him, "We cannot come here because we are afraid." He said to them, "Do what seems right for you. I will not leave my abode."

[35] An allusion to Phi 3:10.

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From that day on, they gave up coming to learn except only once to give him his food. As for the saint, he knew that the coming of the serpent was from Satan, to disturb him by making him afraid. Clad with the power of the Lord, the saint entered his abode. The serpent acted like shaking the wall, moving here and there, and wrapping itself around his[36] body. But the saint, not wavering from the firmness of his stand, signed it with the cross of Christ. The serpent *went out defeated. After that day, the saint saw it dead. The birds ate its flesh. * p. 15

But Satan also summoned the dogs, his companions, to accomplish the temptation that he desired, whereby he boasts over those whom he defeats and whereby he is also disgraced by whom he is defeated. They[37] resembled the nature of every frightening beast, such as lions, leopards, hyenas, and snakes. They surrounded him[38] as though to kill (him), each showing its dreadful desire, roaring to seize (him). Some were about to rake (him) with their claws. Some opened wide their mouths as if to devour (him). Some got set with their horns to gore (him). Some (got set with their teeth) to bite (him) But the saint prayed to the Most High, unmoved, and sought help from him. However, to them, too, he responded, saying, "Why do you increase the gathering of your wickedness? If you were authorized by the Lord to harm me, one of you would be enough. If not, behold, you only show weakness to your disgrace." Satan was very angry because of the frustration of all his arrows, in not harming the saint.

Then when he (Satan) was defeated in this, he further labored in what was worse: by torturing the inside of his body. He caused his whole (body) to burn like fire, like a razor cutting his limbs, and like a worm consuming him. It gnawed all his bones, and sucked his tendons, torturing all parts of (his) nature, thus authorized, as was the case with Job. But his

[36] Or "its" . - [37] Satan's army. - [38] Cf. Ps 21:17/22:16.

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soul remained safe, the cross of the Only-Begotten protecting it, as it recalled his sufferings on the wood of the cross.

* p. 16 *Then, because of the excessive severity of the labor, he collapsed on the ground, unable to talk; he was incapable of singing. But because his heart did not stop, he moved his lips, seeking help from the Mighty One, saying, "O Lord, save me; O Lord deliver me; O Christ, help me." Other than this, there was nothing in him to be understood, heard, or to be known or seen--because of the severity of the affliction that had come on him.

Then when Satan finished afflicting him as far as he was permitted, the Lord visited him from his sanctuary, to help his servant. The enemy was departed (fleeing from) the splendor of the coming of the master of the house. The sound of his departure was like the rising of a swarm of flies from a carcass; and he fell on the ground before the saint having become powerless.[39] (The saint) was surrounded by the flame of majesty of the visitor. At that moment the saint heard the word of the Lord, which said, "He who loves me keeps my word (and) my Father loves him. I, too, love him and manifest myself to him."[40] With this reference to his Gospel, he made himself known to the saint, by showing his face. At that moment he touched him and healed him. He poured the dew of joy into all his bones.

Then the Lord held the hand of the saint and strengthened him; he enabled him to seize that enemy who had afflicted him. As he was held on his hand by the hand of his Lord, he seized his enemy and trampled him like a dry leaf. At that moment the saint also heard the voice of an ordering of many angels, saying, "Congratulations (to) you who have defeated the serpent." Then the enemy, withdrawing from him a little, said to the saint, "Do you think that you have defeated me?" The saint said to him, "It is not I, but the power of my God has defeated you." Satan said to him, "I will come again

[39] Not clear. - [40] Jn 14:21.

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against you in a way you will not understand." The saint said to him, "At that time, *too, the Lord himself will defeat you again, like now." He disappeared before him instantly, (himself) tortured instead of him inflicting torture, for the Lord had helped his servant and brought him justice for his soul. * p. 17

From that time on, the saint was raised to seeing the sight of the glorious heavenly mystery, to the extent that he saw the holy Virgin Mary and heard her voice. Being thus in the spiritual resurrection, which comes before the general (resurrection and is) perfect help--to be with the perfect ones, who are the few from the many who are called[41]--he walked in the delight of its mysteries of knowledge, understanding, taste, and smell, to the extent that every thing of this corruptible world was removed and became far from him. He found his soul being strengthened by being clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, like the holy Apostles at Pentecost. He then lived those days amazed by the sight of the divine mystery.

Then when it was the day of the Sabbath, he went up to the monastery to take Communion, as he was formerly accustomed, before his affliction. There were two old men who sat there at the entry to the gate of the church. They were poor of any possession, devoted to prayer. When they saw the saint coming, they hastened running to receive him. They greeted him, saying, "Congratulations (to) you who have defeated the world." The saint said to them, "Why do you talk like this?" They said to him, "Because we heard from heaven the cry of many angels about you, saying, 'Congratulations (to) you who have defeated the world.' For this reason, we, too, have spoken like them." The saint rebuked them and said to them, *"Do not tell this to anyone."[42] There were also many others who marveled the beauty of his appearance, because his countenance was glorified by the consolation of his heart. * p. 18

[41] Cf. Mat 22:14. - [42] Cf. Mt. 16: 20.

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Then after a little while, when the harvest of the fruit was over, he returned to his abode. They brought him his meal there. His occupation became copying. He copied the holy books, the Prophets and the Gospels, with understanding. The saint lived thus in tranquility from the waves of the sea. He stayed beached on the shore of the harbor where the saints stay, understanding thus to serve the mystery of the Holy Spirit, bringing out from his Lord's treasure (what is) new and old[43] and seeing everything through the mirror of the Spirit, unveiled. Sometimes he heard a voice calling him and saying to him, "Behold, so and so is being tempted by the arrow of the enemy. Help him, therefore, in haste."

Then many started coming to him from that monastery and from others, seeking their soul's salvation, with which they would be liberated from the bondage of Satan. Learning from him, they started to follow the practice of his abstinence. Then the people of the monastery became jealous of him. They accused the saint at the abbot, saying, "Behold, he persists (in acting) according to his own counsel, which is not the manner of life of the monastery. Behold, he also attracts others to the asceticism of his seclusion." The abbot accepted what they said and he, too, joined their group. The abbot then said to the saint, "Why do you depart from the manner of life of the monastery in your words and deeds? Why do you not stop that which your fellow (monks) do not like?" The saint said to him, "This judgment, did you pronounce according to the
* p. 19 witness of the rule *or by giving preference to what they say? If it is to be done by just judgment, investigate my words and their words. But if you pronounce judgment according to what they say only, behold, my oppression is thus from you, too."

When the saint spoke to him like this, the abbot was very angry. He said to the saint, "Behold, demons have possessed you. Your words are from the power of Satan."

[43] The reference is to Mt 13:51, but the author understood it to mean the New and Old Testaments.

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When the saint heard his insult, he prostrated himself before God three times. The abbot said to the saint further, "From now on, do not recline in your abode (for your meals) but only in the meeting of the community of the brothers." The saint said to him, "Very well." Then the saint lived in their community, and received his meal once, as is meet for the asceticism of his monastic habit. He remained thus for half a year. Then when the abbot breathed out his anger, he let the saint go to his abode.

When the saint had completed his oppressive obedience, he went to a certain monastery with one brother, and lived there in seclusion. Then the saint had a vision: It was as if there was a great and wide sea before him. When many monks saw the sea, they extended their wings and hurled themselves into it like locusts. They were unable to swim to get out, so that they perished. Also it was as though there was a bird bound to the little finger of the saint's hand. It, too, used force to hurl itself into the sea, like those who were drowned. But the tie prevented it. Then it turned and scratched the saint's hand so that it wounded him. At once he let it go; and it hurled itself into the sea.

Then after this incident, that brother, who was with the saint, set out to return to where he was before. *The saint said to him, "Endure; for this thought of yours is from the enemy." The brother behaved maliciously against the saint in his words and deeds. He went and joined those who conspired against the saint.

* p. 20

Then many good people of that monastery were consoling the saint wherever he went, wanting to follow him. Then the people of the monastery counseled with the abbot to bring the saint back to his former abode, saying, "If he does not come back here, many will leave us, looking for him." They asked the saint to come back. He agreed and came back to his abode.

Then after a little while, the saint set out and went to Metropolitan *Abba* Bärtälomewos to discuss with him

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religious matters. He found him at his residence (in a place) called ʻAlät. The saint greeted the metropolitan and stayed with him a little while. The metropolitan examined the saint, saying, "Why have you come here?" The saint said to him, "I came to tell you about my manner of life and also to have understanding with you, for there are books in our country filling the churches, all agreeing--from the Old to the New Testament--in teaching righteousness. But there is no court of appeal which helps with a judgment of their words. For everyone lives according to what his manner of life requires. I came to show you my manner of life, concerned lest you be offended by the words of others, when you hear my news from others who malign it." The metropolitan said, "You did well."

* p. 21

*Then the saint discussed with him on what concerned the subject of faith, showing him his worship of the Creator who exists in a Trinity of persons without confusion or difference, bringing witnesses from the revelations of the Prophets and the teaching of the Apostles. And as regards the seventh day, (that he maintained) that its honor was ordered at the beginning of the creation to those who were in Paradise, before Judaism. Likewise, now, too, the holy Apostles have prescribed that we should rest (on it)[44] because Paradise has been opened by the renewal of the world.[45]

Then when the metropolitan saw the intelligence of the saint's words and the beauty of his manner of life, he said to him, "My son, behold, the Holy Spirit is upon you; and every word of yours is by the authority of his grace. Now teach everyone thus. Let me write[46] my authorization to you so that

[44] Getatchew, "Sabbath;" Bausi, *Senodos*, articles 4 (11-14), pp. 45-47, and 11-14, pp. 78-83, and probably article 19, p.154. - [45] That is, the New Testament. - [46] Probably, "I will write". "The authorization" is, as is confirmed by MS 63, f. 16a, a kind of confession of faith which *Abba* Ǝsṭifanos could show in case his opponents accused him of heresy. This was not unusual at that time. When Metropolitans Bärtälomewos, who came during the reign of Yəśḥaq, and Mika'el and Gäbrə'el, who came during the reign of Zär'a Yaʻəqob, arrived in Ethiopia, they were all asked, and they answered, Bärtälomewos in writing, about their faith in the Trinity, Conti Rossini-Ricci, *Berhān* I, p. 43; and Conti Rossini-Ricci, *Berhān* II, p. 48.

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they may accept your word." The saint said to the metropolitan, "My father, many would be offended by me if I went to their centers to teach, as though I were seeking bodily glory for myself." The metropolitan said, "Have you not heard what he said to John the Evangelist, 'It will be sweet to your mouth and to your stomach it will be bitter.'[47] Similarly, you, too, fear not people's blame." The saint said to him, "Do not compel me, my father, to teach traveling around, but I will speak to whoever comes to me." The metropolitan said to him, "Do then as you have said, for the spirit of God is upon you."

Then he ordained him with the ordination of priesthood, for the saint was at that time 30 years old. Then the saint, having written a confession of faith before the metropolitan[48]--so that it may be a document for those who would contradict him--and having been blessed by the metropolitan, returned to his abode in peace.

*Then the saint taught those who came to him that they should abide by the rule of the scriptures. He also taught them the spledid belief in the Trinity, removing from their hearts the error of Sabellius. Furthermore, he made them understand that those who have kept the commandments of God and have defeated the world will come the reception of the gift of grace which the saints have received, now in the flesh before death, by a resurrection of the soul, before the resurrection of the body. Many accepted his words; they gathered at the abode of the saint to hear the lessons regarding the Sabbaths and the holy days, resting according to the ordinance of the canon. They started to keep themselves from any doubting, in words and deeds. * p. 22

The people of the monastery became angry with the saint and with those who were learning from him. But they did not know what to do. When they argued with him on an issue,

[47] Cf. Rev 10:9. - [48] According to Schneider MS 63, it was the metropolitan, not Ǝsṭifanos, who wrote the letter or confession of the faith; see n. 46 above.

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they themselves were defeated. Furthermore, his lesson became a reproach to their actions. Then they started to expel those who took lessons from the saint from communion and their refectory tables. Also their spokesmen rose up and adjured the saint, saying, "We adjure you by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that you leave our monastery." The saint, hearing of his expulsion by the people of the monastery, went to the abbot to inquire from him, if he agreed with them or would do justice for him. He, too, shut the door of his abode and prevented his entering. The saint, knowing that they were all united in exiling him, left his abode and went into exile, enduring his oppression. Many were exiled with him. On that
* p. 23 *exile of his, he went as far as Lake Saf.[49] Then he turned back and settled in the land of Wägära.

Then after a little while, that abbot that had exiled him, sent (a missive) to the saint, saying, "Have compassion on my old age. Let me not die with my sin which I committed against you. Now, pardoning my crime, make an effort to come to me because I want to meet you." When he urged the saint, sending (a missive) like this once, twice, and thrice, the saint said to the brothers who were with him, "This message of his is not for any good (purpose) but that he seeks my suffering. And you, now let your mind be ready. I, not being afraid of their torture, behold, I will go, so that they may be deprived of a pretext (for accusation)."

Then he set out to go. They, too, went with him. They arrived at that monastery from which they had been exiled, and met the abbot. The people of the monastery gathered and increased the conspiracy of their words (of accusation), which were not seasoned with salt.[50] Then they seized the brothers who were with the saint and put them in chains. As for the saint, they considered to (and did) exile him alone. But some said, "If he is not imprisoned, we will not be able to silence the others." So, the abbot gave orders that they bring back the

[49] The former name of Lake Tana. - [50] Cf. Col 4:6.

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saint from his journey. They brought a heavy chain which had a lock. They bound the saint with it on 13 Ḥamle. The abbot kept the key of the chain, as he did not trust others. They kept him in this condition for two months. But the saint's fame was gathering strength daily, in teaching *and admonishing those who came near him and, furthermore, in reproaching those who opposed the law of the scriptures. * p. 24

Then when they failed to defeat the saint by chaining (him) up, they further plotted to shut him up in jail without a supply of food, determined to kill him. On 5 Ṗagʷmen, they shut the saint up in jail with his legs bound. They brought a carpenter and had the apertures of the jail blocked up, sparing none. They abandoned him (in the dark) like a buried corpse. Then God brought fear on them. They quarreled with each other, saying, "If he dies locked up in this condition, behold, the governors will hear and raid our land, even to the extent of the destruction of our monastery. Now let us let him go wherever he wants."

Then on 10 Mäskäräm, they brought him out of the jail and loosened his chain from his legs. The abbot said to the saint, "Forgive us all the evil things we have done against you. Now, if you stay in the monastery, may God grant you the authority of grace which he gave to the Apostles. And if you go to the desert, may he give you similarly the gift which was given to the desert saints. And may God be with you in all that you undertake and give you final victory. Go wherever you want. Hold no grudge for the crimes we have committed against you." The saint said to them, "There will come no evil to you from me. But repent to God so that he may forgive you."

*Then he departed from that monastery and went and settled near the river Täkkäze together with his disciple Gäbrä Krəstos who, from the first, was a participant with the saint in his exiles and imprisonments. Other brothers, too, lived near him, keeping the prescripts that he taught them. He said to * p. 25

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them, "Live like this in all matters at Däbrä Gärzen, persevering in blessing God for all he has done, so that by it you may receive the blessing of God and life, from now and for ever."

Then when the teachers[51] of the districts of that region heard a report about him, they were very upset. By common consent, they met twice with the governor of the region, wanting to stop his teaching. The saint met them with the sword of the law, bringing the word of the commandment as witness. Fearing the power of the saint's argument, they even denied the monastic book--as though they did not know it. And so they were unable to resist the saint. Defeated, they went to their respective monasteries, carrying the seed of the saint's teaching against their will. With their disciples hearing the saint's preaching, discord took place in all their monasteries, disputing among themselves, until the good ones were stirred up and left and accepted his preaching. The beauty of the teaching of the saint was (thus) widespread.

Then his news was heard in all the regions of this kingdom. Many assembled in his presence and were captivated by the preaching of his teaching. He organized them to be in groups of 12 for each of their communities, and that they
* p. 26 appoint for each community one whom they elect from *their number as a procurator[52] who would minister to them in giving orders when performing their manual work. He also ordered them that they elect from all communities one minister who would fill the (function of) commanding all the ministers of the communities. It was so also in all their monasteries. He made for them measures of bread, vegetable, and water for their nourishment. He commanded them not to exceed it by getting more. They should also not change (what they received) because it was too little. He ordered them similarly about clothes, that they should not make anyone better off by bettering (his clothes) or make him worse off by treating him

[51] I.e. "abbots" . - [52] The word is *qäwami*.

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less well. They must rather make every thing equal in everything.

He laid down for them the holy order of the Apostles as it is found in the book of their Acts.[53] He said to them:

Live with one heart and soul, chained together with the chain of peace.[54] Let none of you have thought other than what is his (proper concern), neither in thought nor deed, whether about clothes or food, neither when going nor returning. Rather, be servants of the rule of righteousness. Deny the freedom of your corruptible flesh by submitting to the pleasure of your brothers (and so escape) the power of the enemy Satan.

Live by the work of your hands. Do not accept vainly the labor of others. And possess nothing; let there be no possession for you on earth where it will get old and become corrupt. Rather, be followers of the word of the Lord, and practice it all the time so that your possession will be in heaven where neither worm nor moth will find it.[55] The remainder of your labor, whether food *or clothes, * p. 27 give to whom the Lord has ordered. Keep it not for the morrow, saying, "For the coming year." Observe the order of the goodness of our God, which he prepared for his creation, by bringing winter (rain) and giving fruits and granting a blessing every season and every time.[56] Likewise, you, too, do according to the Lord's arrangement, making that of today do for today; and that which will come do for next year. For when God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, he made them dwell in the desert, and rained manna for them for their food. He ordered them to gather each day and that they should not keep any overnight for the morrow. Some transgressed his words and kept some overnight for the morrow, in their unbelief. For this reason, it bred worms and became rotten.[57] This was a sign for monasticism. Similarly, he also ordered us in the holy Gospel to pray to him, saying, "Give us today our food for each day."[58]

[53] Cf. Acts 4:32-37. - [54] Cf. Eph 4:1-4. - [55] Cf. Mt 6:19-20. - [56] Cf. Acts 14:17. - [57] Ex 16:19-20. - [58] Lk 11:3.

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He warned (us) against seeking anything else, whether by gathering or by thought, because he orders us to imitate the birds in living light, without storing up. For when birds are chased away, they fly lightly because they do not have the weight of a load. Similarly, you, too, live light, without storing where it will be corrupt. Let your excess be found in the belly of the poor; and, similarly, the clothes, too, be for the naked. For in the Torah, too, the Lord says, "Let not the fat of my sacrifice be kept overnight for the next day.[59] If someone keeps it for another (day) my soul does not take pleasure in it."[60] For this reason, let us be afraid. Let there not be found things in excess among you. Give it graciously to those who give thanks (to the Lord). And it will be stored up for you where it will not be
* p. 28 corrupted, and your heart will be there, in *heaven, the holy place,[61] to which you have been called in order that you may inherit the blessing.[62]

Make for yourself no plantings that are kept in (your) hearts. Because of this, robbers are slain. As for those who multiply gardens of herbs, these will become their inheritance and are kept in their hearts; and they will become (too) weak to carry the cross. Do not make a stumbling block to your freedom.[63] Stay always on the alert, imitating the birds. When they drive you out of one (place), you will go lightly to another one and rest there for a time of blessing according to the hope of the words of the Lord who says, "Verily I say to you that the cities of Israel shall not be completed until the time when the Son of Man comes."[64] Devote yourselves, therefore, to keeping the witness of the holy scriptures of the Church, of the Old and New Testaments, which the holy Apostles made known to us, that are the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven, observing the Sabbaths and the holy days, as is written in the holy *Senodos*.[65]

[59] Ex 23:18; Lev. 22: 30; Deut 16:4. - [60] Perhaps a rephrase of Lev 22:30-32. - [61] Cf. Mt 6:19-21. - [62] Cf. 1 Pet 3:9. - [63] Cf. Gal 5:13. - [64] Cf. Mt 10:23. - [65] For the study of the sources, see Getatchew, "Sabbath," pp. 233-254; but see also Bausi, *Senodos*, article 4 (11-14), pp. 45-47 and pp. 78-83.

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Do not incise your body with the customary reason of sickness, and do not shed your blood, you who are sharers in the blood of the mystery of Christ. Seek nothing of what people call remedies, whether of plants or otherwise, neither for drinking nor anointing nor smelling nor for anything else. Our medicine is our Savior, as has been written, "God is the God of my salvation."[66] For plague is from his anger and living is from his will. Be ready in every respect to accept *the Lord's rebuke in giving thanks. "For no one lives to himself. If we live it is for God; and if we die, it is for God,"[67] not for ourselves. But those who trouble themselves in seeking divination, called remedies and omens, and in reciting the invocation of words that are not from the canonical books, put their souls under the sword of anathema, and the deluge of fire awaits them, like their former teachers. But you remain at all times in the hall of instruction of the Only-Begotten, sucking the milk of his divine Gospel, growing up by it to salvation,[68] and be brothers with the saints. Make haste with joy to arrive at the feast of their true delight, as the holy Apostle says, for there is rest where the saints enter.[69] Be girded with victorious strength so that you may defeat Satan and all his snares.

* p. 29

He would admonish them always with such teaching. He laid down rules for them concerning every thing, leaving nothing out, as is set forth in the acts of their community.[70] He visited them evenings and mornings. He made (the purpose of) their existence clear and increased their knowledge so that they might grow to maturity. He recited for them the witness of the scriptures and interpreted for them the hidden (meaning) in order that they might be strengthened by it to carry the cross. He was constantly diligent until he made them fervent with the fervor of Christ that dwelt on him, as the dove incubates its egg and gives it warmth, removing from it dirt, until it

[66] Ps 50:16/51:14; and 29:6/30:5. - [67] Cf. Rom 14:7-8. - [68] Cf. 1 Pet 2:2-3. - [69] Heb 4:9
[70] This must be their monastic rule.

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becomes alive, and its bodily form is impressed on it, and is diligent in providing food from what is ordained for them,[71] until they grow up and follow its footsteps.

* p. 30 *Thus our holy father being for us a spiritual mother, gathered eggs, those that were captivated by the preaching of his teaching, put them aboard the spiritual boat, which is the holy rule, and covered them with the cloak of the holy faith with the knowledge of their Creator, in understanding the essence of their[72] Trinity, and fed them the food of the spirit of his life-giving commandments. He made them understand prudent diligence so that they might guard the windows of their hearts from the thought(s) of the enemy, and might devote themselves to spiritual washing so that they may cleanse their soul at all times in constant fidelity so that thereby they might be abodes of the One who created them.

They, too, receiving this, became fervent by the fervor of their spiritual father until the dirt of sin was removed from them,[73] which had made peace with them before, when it found them abandoned, without a mother. Then they became alive and moved according to the likeness of their soul, abandoning the needs of the flesh and its corrupt desires. They became fixed with the desire of following the entire race of their father.

When Satan saw that his recruits who practiced his teaching were many, he roused all the monasteries of the regions, those that were near and those that were far, so that they might be united in accusing the saint to the governors of the province. Satan put the yeast of his accusation[74] in the water jar of the
* p. 31 hearts of those who had become his *children so that he[75] might ally with them to shed the blood of all the saints, about which the Lord said that he would seek from them from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah.[76] Similarly, it will be

[71] Changed number (that is, to "many chicks"). - [72] Changed number (that is, from "one God" to "three persons"). - [73] Cf. Isa 1:25. - [74] Or "dow." - [75] Text, "they."
[76] Mt 23:35.

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so also from the blood of the master of the house to the blood of all the people of his household. Then they poured poison squeezed from their mind(s) until they shed the blood of the righteous one, saying, "Behold, this man violates the rule of our monasteries and insults our elders and reproaches our teachers. He says that we teach lies, outside the law. He makes liars our seers who announce that which is hidden and contemplate visions. He says that they themselves are deceived by the phantasms of demons and are seduced by dreams that lead into error. Behold, our disciples are captivated by his teaching. Coming back (from attending it), they cause disturbance among us, setting his words as witness." They accused him of many things, this and similar things.

However, the governors knew that all the accusations they were making were because of their jealousy. They said to them, "We shall summon him for you and have you argue the case with him." Then those governors sent (a missive) to the saint so that he might come to them. When he came therefore, they thus said to him, "O father, it is not that we do not know the truth of your words and the rectitude of the rule that you teach, that it is truly from God. Ever since you moved about our land, compassion has prevailed. Many errors have been eliminated by hearing the preaching of your teaching, not only here but also in distant regions where news of you has been heard. But these monks[77] bother us in opposing your teaching. They seek to have us join with them in mistreating you and *your disciples and to make a raid and carry off the labor of your disciples. They say, 'He takes our disciples, and devastates our monasteries.' And they say about you, 'With sorcery he converts to himself the hearts of people.' Because of jealousy, they murmur much against you. But we know that your teaching is the commandment of God. When we ignore their accusation against you, they intimidate us. We fear them,

* p. 32

[77] *fäläst* "the displaced" (here, "from this world").

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lest they accuse us before the king, that you are a heretic and that we are allies in the heresy of your teaching. Therefore, in order that they may be deprived of a pretext (for their malice), we have said to them, 'Come together, you, who have a suit with him; we will have you argue the case.' Therefore, we have sent for you." The saint said, "Let them come and present their suit."

Then they held a synod. Those who accused the saint came forward and started to present their suit in brief, although they murmured much in secret. They said: "Behold, this man puts discord among us. He brings another teaching, which our fathers have not taught us, and takes away our (spiritual) children to himself and devastates our monasteries. This is our suit."

Then the saint raised his voice, saying,

There is no one whom I have injured; and there is no one whom I have wronged, not one among them. But to him who seeks the way of life, I have indicated the law of God. I have invited no one by deceptive trickery of words or by promising the wealth of this transient world. Rather, so that they may have life in the grace of God, I have taught the law of God, that they subject themselves to him. And I did receive those who were exiled because of this law, for he says, "Love your companion like yourself."[78] Regarding their accusation, "He has introduced what is not of our fathers," *I have not taught anything but the law of God. But if they say that (my teaching) is not the law of God, behold, my witness are the books of the Church that my teaching is the law of God. Let them not disregard the law just because their fathers have not taught (it). If their fathers did not understand, let they themseves enter through the gate of the teaching of the law. For the holy Gospel says, "He who climbs in by another, different, way is a thief and a robber."[79] If they do not want to subject themselves to

* p. 33

[78] Mt 19:19; Lk 10:27. - [79] Jn 10:1.

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the commandment of God, why do they prevent someone else from subjecting to God? Regarding their saying, "Our children," how did they become their children without their teaching them the commandment of God, and without giving them the grace of liberation from sin? How have they, too, taken the name of fatherhood without subjecting themselves to the commandment of our fathers, the holy Apostles, and their successors, Anthony and Macarius, the father of monks? But if they oppose in vain him who seeks the truth, I tell them to be servants either of God or of Caesar. For the Lord has said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and what is God's do it for God."[80]

They said to him, "Who has appointed you over us, that you speak thus to us?" The saint said to them, "The law of God has appointed me to practice (it) and teach (it)." Then they stood up in rage and made an attack to seize the disciples of the saint by violence. The saint said to the governors, "Why do they act like this when you are Christians and the king, too, is a Christian, *and when I say, 'Let it be in the justice of God,' you let them overpower us without justice?" Thereupon they sent their troops and stopped them by force. Because of the roaring of their anger, they said whatever came to them, insulting the saint, saying, "This preying wolf!" and "This ravening hawk!" But the saint watched their spectacular[81] behavior. He smiled, rejoicing in the strength[82] of (his) power, like a strong lion that is not troubled by the noise of the howling of foxes. He merely responded to them with blessing in return for their cursing him. * p. 34

Then the saint raised his voice seeking justice for his case. One of them, who was steeped in sin, an enemy of the truth, stood up and said to the saint, "We adjure you by the king that you do not talk to us." The saint answered and said, "I have not spoken about this world's property, over which kings have dominion. I spoke, rather the word of God, (about)

[80] Mt 22:21. - [81] Or "hysterical" ? - [82] Not clear.

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the life of the soul. For the word of the heavenly king cannot be prevented by an earthly king. But an earthly king can be prevented by the word of the heavenly king. 'The word of God cannot be bound.'"[83]

That deceiver said to him, "But you do not recognize even the king." The saint said, "I do recognize the king of the Christians; he is a Christian in truth. May God preserve his kingdom." That seeker of a pretext said, "I call him Israel." The saint said, "I call him Christian." The saint asked that man, saying, "Now, tell me, seeing that you say 'Israelite,' * p. 35 when I say 'Christian,' is the name of Israel *or the name of Christianity greater?" That misguided one said, "The name of Israel is greater." The saint answered, saying, "No, the name of Christianity is greater. Israelites are called Israel being born of flesh. As for the name of Christianity, they are called Christians being born by a heavenly birth by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the name of the holy catholic apostolic Church is greater."

When those governors heard this, they held a discussion among themselves and said, "All this matter is too difficult for us; it is not something that we can settle. Rather, let them go to the king." They said to the saint and to the others, "Give us a guarantor until you go to the king. You shall settle all your affairs there." The others gave a guarantor. But the saint said, "I will not give some one as a guarantor of myself--a ransom for my soul--I, who say, 'I have died to the world.' For the holy *Senodos* commands that a priest should not give a guarantor as a ransom for his soul.[84] If there is someone who has given (a guarantor, the *Senodos*) commands that he be deprived of his rank. If you trust me, send me so. But if you are unwilling, behold, I myself am at your disposal."

They realizing the finality of his word, gave an order that they bind him with chains. They put him in irons on the 24th of the month of Mäskäräm. The prefect of Sire placed

[83] 2 Tim 2:10. - [84] Bausi, *Senodos*, article 19, pp. 191 and 245.

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him in his compound until this prefect and that officer who was responsible for Sire prepared and dispatched their messengers. They completed (preparing) every thing, and then on the 28th of the month of Ṭəqəmt, they took him to go. They dispatched their messengers, making them grasp the entire *controversy of their discord so that they might present it to the king. At that moment they removed for him his fetters from his hand. His disciples sent him off in peace. Also many went with him. * p. 36

Then on 12th Taḫśaś, they arrived at the gate of the king with much weariness. Then after a little while, those messengers presented their message to the king and explained the entire controversy of their discord. The accusers and the saint, however, they did not bring in to stand before him until they had ascertained all their life affairs while they remained outside.

The accusers, however, stirred up the entire camp, saying, "Behold, this man who has arrived (here), is a sorcerer; by spells he turns people's hearts towards himself, that they may justify his words. No one ever ignores his words if he touches him with his hand, because with his mouth he speaks (from) the scriptures but there is another heresy hidden in his heart. There is no one at all to whom he reveals it, for him to know it, save for the few who persevere staying with him." Furthermore, they said to the monks and the royal widows (and) the nobles, who bore the monastic title,[85] "Behold, this man has come to oppose monks. He calls us 'violators of the covenant.' He says that those who have made a covenant with God to abandon the world so as to be soldiers for Him alone have then returned to the world, and have violated their covenant with God, and have become soldiers of earthly (lords). Therefore, the anger (of God) will come on earth. The governors listen to his words to get control of *our property. * p. 37

[85] These are people who wore the monastic garb but lived in their homes, keeping their properties and social status.

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Now help us; this matter does not concern only us, but you, too, for he has risen against all."

Some of them were angry with the accusers, saying, "It is not he, but you, who have brought on this quarrel so as to bring ignominy on yourselves and on us, too. Who will dispute in this the truth of his words? For it is truly as he says." Also many, having heard about him from the accusers, came to the saint and learned the word of life.

As for the king, he sent the erudite in the scriptures[86] from his clergy of the camp to look into his affair. These interrogated him about everything--about virginity, about marriage, how the life of the faithful should be, what is the obligation of celibacy, what are the degrees of priesthood, how should be the responsibility of shepherds, what is the duty of the flock, and how is monasticism by abandoning the world and following the Lord. They asked him about anything as much as they could. And he answered them in the Holy Spirit, explaining to them about everything they asked him, doubling its[87] benefit until it shone in their hearts. Also those who disagreed about a word of the scripture would come to him and tell (it) to him. And he would show them the truth of the word on which they disagreed. They, too, having understood the matter from him would become reconciled. They came to him every morning. He passed his day at the (royal) encampment.[88]

One day, as the saint sat, as he was accustomed, and
* p. 38 many people, including priests, were with him, *a certain man asked him, saying, "Father, make me understand the faith of the belief in the Trinity, because someone disagreed with me when he heard me say, 'The Father is (like) the sun, the Son its light, and the Holy Spirit its heat.' He said to me, 'What you say is not right.' I said to him, 'Tell me what is right.' But he refused to tell me. For this reason, I have come to you." The saint said to him, "Go, call him to come here." He said, "He

[86] Not clear, Amharic? - [87] I.e. his explanation's. - [88] Although it would be ungrammatical, probably, "He passed his day at the hall of the camp."

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will not come for me." Some who were sitting there said, "What is the dispute about it? For it is a correct statement." The saint said to them, "Now, you tell me, what is the meaning of sun if not light and heat? For God created the sun with the quality of heated light. Would you call it three? Is it not one as we see it?" They said to him, "Then tell us." He said to them, "I say the Father is the sun of righteousness, perfect in his essence, (and) in every way complete. The Son, too, is the sun of righteousness, perfect in his essence like the Father who has begotten him. The Holy Spirit, too, is the sun of righteousness, perfect in his essence like the Father from whom he has proceeded. For this is the faith of the Holy Church--Light from Light, God from God, Lord from Lord.[89] There is no different being[90] for one, which is not in the other; and there are no parts for the one different from the fullness of the other. The Father is the begetter, the Son is the begotten from the Father, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, who proceeded from the Father: three hypostases and persons. The three of them are equal in divinity, glory, power, honor, ability, authority, will, and action."

*Then having heard this (confession of) faith, they thanked God and glorified him, while their hearts sang to the essence of his Trinity without confusion or separation. There was fulfilled in his servant the word of the Lord, that says, "According to the beauty of the deeds of the teachers, their father in the heavens shall be praised."[91] * p. 39

As for the king, when he understood the subtlety of the beauty of the teaching of the saint, he ordered the herald to proclaim that all the monks in his camp should assemble on the day he would make the saint stand before himself. He summoned also the Metropolitan *Abba* Mika'el.[92] He

[89] Cf. the Nicene Creed. - [90] Or "nature" . - [91] Cf. Mt 5:16. - [92] There seems to be a confusion of two incidents, one that took place before Yəśḥaq ascended the throne in 1413--when Yəśḥaq's predecessor was removed and the throne was occupied by one of the dignitaries--and the other after his ascension, as is recorded in MS Schneider

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summoned all the clergy of the camp and all officials with knowledge of the scriptures. More than one thousand monks assembled. The accusers were with him. He made all of them stand before him by themselves. He brought in the saint, too, before him, and made him stand by himself with his disciples. Our holy father greeted the king with a holy blessing, meet for his soul. Then the king said to the saint, "Indicate your concern for which you have come (here)." The saint answered, saying to him:

My coming here is not by my own volition; rather they brought me in irons. Nevertheless, it is the will of God that I stand before you. I, too, am pleased with it. However, I do not have any concern regarding the flesh that bothers me, that is sought from a tribunal of the flesh. But I have a concern that is spiritual, about which the other brothers are
* p. 40 contending with me. May God *give light to the eyes of your mind to understand his law; and may he also give you strength to enforce it. May God put his judgment and justice upon you and upon all who hear my case. And now, listen to my words.

For God, may his name be blessed, and is blessed in all his works, instated the sky and founded the earth. He provided in them suitable blessings on which we should live, which are proper for the flesh. He put in the firmament of the sky lights--the sun, the moon, and the stars--so that we may tell the times, the hours, the weeks, the months and the year. He made them parables of the mystery of the world that would appear in the chosen year. The Lord, having completed all the preparation, created man on the sixth (day) in his own image in which he would appear for his work[93], after becoming a human being from his daughter,[94] and He called him Adam. God rested on the

63, ff. 36a- 39b. Metropolitan Mika'el came to Ethiopia in 1438. - [93] This may be a thinly veiled proclamation of their belief that, as the Zämika'elites argued at that time, God has no specific and definite image. According to Zär'a Ya'əqob and his group, God does have an image. - [94] The reason why the author did not mention the Blessed Virgin by name is obvious.

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seventh day. He blessed it and sanctified it, and made it a covenant, thus giving a sign for what he would grant at the time he had ordained when Zion[95] would be fulfilled, and when the new Father of the world would appear so that all with circumcised heart might rest with him. He made it a covenant forever and placed it in the firmament of man's soul, and commanded that he live according to his counsel. He set for him two tables of food, of the spirit and the flesh: the Holy Spirit for the nourishment for his soul and Paradise of the delight for his flesh.

Although he was a beneficiary of this gift, man was deceived by the counsel of the enemy, to the extent that he met with death for his soul. And the Lord took away from him grace and hid it in the coffer of his counsel. And man was submerged in a swamp of sorrow, himself and all his offspring. His children bore the fruit of the thorns of death so much so that the earth complained about their wickedness, and *God eliminated most of them by the punishment of the deluge, leaving no one to survive, save Noah with his children, for the sake of the plant of righteousness, keeping his covenant.

* p. 41

Again when they multiplied, generations later, they built a tower. And there he also divided their languages. Again they labored in sacrificing to gods, preferring their handwork to the creator. God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him that through his offspring all the peoples of the earth would be blessed.

Then again, the people of Sodom angered him. He rained fire on them. He saved Lot with his children from their destruction. And the Egyptians afflicted Israel with killing and bitter servitude. God helped Israel by means of Moses, and brought them out to the wilderness. As for the men of Egypt, he drowned them in the sea. He gave the Torah to Israel so that they might keep his law. But they turned their hearts back to Egypt. They angered him by unbelief until he destroyed them in the wilderness. Those that remained, he brought into the land of inheritance, which he had sworn (to give) to Abraham.

[95] "Mount" ?

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After this, generations later, he called David in a righteous choice to be king in order that he might shepherd his people, and made him a type for his own government that has no end. He served him until he slept. But Israel did not stop angering him, ignoring the law and killing the prophets who proclaimed his coming.

Then God sent the king of Babylon (against them). He took them into captivity, deporting them from their country. Then, after 70 years, he again restored them to
* p. 42
*their land, forgiving their wickedness and remembering his covenant that he would fulfill at the time he had ordained. He invited Israel by frequent announcements of the day of the feast. When the time of the banquet arrived,[96] he fulfilled his counsel, which he had ordained before (the creation of) the world, in a wonderful epiphany, becoming man without the seed of man, from the pure virgin daughter of David.[97]

Then he showed the beauty of his work by giving life to his creation, which had been made by none other than the Creator himself. But Israel that had been invited ignored his word. They envied him; they insulted him; they made him suffer until they brought him to death. He caught Satan by the suffering of his death--which happened without sin--such that he seized from him, by a just judgment, Adam who had been caught by erring.

The Lord, having fulfilled (his mission), slept the sleep of death on the bed of his cross. They pierced him his side with a spear until blood and water flowed out. From this, the Church was built. He founded it on sapphire stones, his holy Apostles, where waves of wind and floods cannot shake it.[98] He completed it by roofing it with his flesh. He placed in that roof (like the firmament)[99] the lights of the law of order that (comes) from his light. He made stars, which do not set, in order that those who recline in the house of the feast may rejoice in that light, recognizing the

[96] Cf. Lk 14:17-24. - [97] Again, her name is not mentioned. - [98] Cf. Mt 7:25. - [99] A play on the Amharic word *ṭäffärä* "to fasten tightly" and a verb derived from Gə'əz *ṭäfär* "firmament" , "making it a firmament in".

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hours of the day, the twelve daytime periods, so that they may not stumble on the thorns of the night.

As for Israel who ignored his words, he took away from them prophecy, priesthood and kingship, and gave (them) to his Church.[100] He established in it a beneficial reward for those who subject themselves to the service of his law so that they may receive, in abundance, two (benefits): obtaining life in this (temporal) world and in the coming one, which is eternal.

*For this reason, I, too, wanted, O king, to be in this service, devoting myself to follow his footsteps, and to cleanse myself by what he has ordained for me so as to be delivered from the madness of the night, which is outside. Then I found companion(s) who wanted (to live) as I want. They said to me, "Tell us the commandment of serving the Lord of the farm."[101] I was willing to benefit them as he had benefited me with his suffering, for he has ordered me to give from what he has given me freely.[102] From then on, I have been persuading them of the commandment of the lights, which are hanging in the roof of his house. They have begun to persevere in the footsteps of his law. * p. 43

Then other brothers rose against me in dispute, saying, "You are teaching what is not the teaching of our country." I said to them, "What is the teaching of this country? And how is it of another (country)? I do not know any other (teaching) than all that is in Christ and the one Church." Because of this, they became so angry with me that they brought me to the governors and contended with me there on this sort of issue, but with extraneous matter, without reference to the law. As for me, I appealed to the books of the laws of the Church so that my position and their position might be ruled (by them). Ignoring this, they have brought me here in irons. Nevertheless, I am content with this, too, for the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ prevails everywhere. For the scripture says, "Now

[100] Justifying and defending his previous statement at the governor's court, that the name of Christianity is higher than the name Israelites. - [101] Probably an allusion to Mt 13:3. - [102] Cf. Mt 10:8.

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therefore, O kings, be wise; and be admonished, all you who govern the earth. Serve God with fear."[103] Now serving God is, O king, that you govern his people with
* p. 44 justice and rectitude,[104] being careful *in executing the law and arranging everything, each according to its ordinance, as is ordained in the holy *Senodos*, that priests shepherd his flock in righteousness and that people be obedient to their shepherds, as is ordained.[105] And let monks, too, persevere in what they have vowed, as the holy Gospel has commanded for those who want to be perfect. For doing this, God will be pleased with you and with all the people under your kingship; and you will obtain victory over your enemy. God will wage war on your behalf for observing his law. But if you do not observe his law, there will be no (reason) for him to prefer you to your enemy. Sometimes you will win; and sometimes they will win, as is (the case) with all people.

Now, observe the law of God so that you may be praised before him, for the prosperity of this world is transient as the Apostle has said, "For everything of the flesh is like grass and all its glory like the seed of the grass. When the grass withers, its seeds fall. But the word of God abides forever."[106] Regarding what the brothers are disputing with me, execute justice for us according to his law. May God be a refuge to your soul.

When the saint finished his presentation, the king said to the monks, "Present the things that you are in dispute with him." Then a man accustomed to lying, the head of the accusers, whose name was Sinoda, opened his mouth: "Behold, I, being zealous for your kingship, asked that they bring me to you because of what he said about you, 'He is not an Israelite'." The king said, "This profanity is from you. We have understood his words, that he has said to you, 'The name of Christianity is greater.' We, too, our boast is in Christianity.

[103] Ps 2:10-11. - [104] Cf. Ps 71:2/72:1. - [105] Bausi, *Senodos*, articles 23-26 (45-48), pp. 26-30; and 9 (43-62), pp.56-64 and 95-107. - [106] 1 Pet 1:24-25.

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Speak rather about how you started the dispute." That man said, "It is not for myself alone *that I am speaking but for all. * p. 45
For he is in dispute with all of us monks." The king said, "If there is any one who wants to help you, let him speak with you. If there is not, finish with what you started." That man said, "For myself alone I do not have a case, but whatever happens to all will happen to me."

The saint said to that man, "It was you who first rose up (in dispute) in place of all of them until we came here. And today, you say, 'I do not have a case!' Then why did you say, 'I have abandoned the world and all that is in it'? You were shrouded and incensed; and you made a covenant with God before the Church, saying, 'From today on, I have vowed myself to God'. After (your) oath and covenant, how do you return to the world to have dominion and acquire possession where there is no wealth that is yours?"

That man said, "Who has prevented us monks, from doing all this that you say?" The saint said to him, "Behold, the law of God proclaims that a monk who has set himself apart to follow the Lord, should have no money." That man said, "Prove it to me." The blessed one said, "Behold, my witness is the holy Gospel, how the Lord said to the rich man who asked him about inheriting life, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell all your possessions and give to the poor and come follow me.'[107] He also said, 'He who wants to be devoted to me, let him hate himself; let him persevere in carrying the cross of his death and follow me every day.'[108] He also said, 'He who does not give up all his money and does not renounce all *that is his, is not worthy of me and cannot be devoted to * p. 46
me.'[109] He also said, 'No one who takes hold of the plow plows backward, for the kingdom of God is straight forward.'[110] And the Apostle Paul said, 'Because all who are in the flesh cannot please God.'[111] He also said, 'If you have died

[107] Cf. Mt 19:21. - [108] Cf. Mt 16: 24; Lk. 9:23. - [109] Cf. Mt 10:37. - [110] Cf. Lk 9:62.
[111] Rom 8:8.

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with Christ to the life of this world, how is it that you go back as though living in the world, for he has said: Do not handle, do not touch and do not taste--this is (destined) for corruption.'"[112]

That man said, "But this is preached to all Christians, not to us monks alone." The saint said, "For all the Christians it is ordained in the *Senodos*, that each live according to his order: for the faithful, that they stay with their wives and rear children in righteousness; and for priests, it is ordered that they receive tithes and first fruits for their possession. This is a witness for you monks, who made covenant with the Lord by abandoning the world."[113] That man said, "I do not have any other (obligation) than what is for all Christians."

Then the king gave an order that all the priests and the monks pass judgment on what they had heard. They all passed judgment, saying, "He[114] has denied his monastic vocation; he is not fit to teach, but let him be a student. Let them give (the accuser), his disciples and his monastery to this saint, for his words are reliable and his testimony is true." The metropolitan, too, agreed with this verdict.

Then the king gave an order that they give (the accuser) to this saint together with his disciples and monastery. The saint said to the king, "I do not want the office. Give him (back) to his (own) teacher that he may make him righteous.
* p. 47 But give an order that they abide by the law of God. *And let them not prevent whoever wants to devote himself to God."

Then the king gave an order to issue a proclamation, saying, "They brought this monk here accusing him, saying, 'He is not orthodox; he teaches unlawfully.' Now, we--I and all the clergy of the camp--have recognized and ascertained that his words are true and his teaching is righteous. He

[112] Cf. Col 2:20-21. - [113] First harvest, Bausi, *Senodos,* articles 2 (9), pp. 43-44 and 76-78; 4 (4), pp. 183-4 and 237; 37 (37), pp. 204-5 and 255; 40, pp. 207-8 and 258-9; for the order that the faithful stay with their spouses, Bausi, *Senodos,* article 10.2 (65), pp. 65-66 and 108-109; regarding obedient faithful, Bausi, *Senodos,* article 24 (46), pp. 27-28. - [114] The spokesman of the accusers.

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preaches the teaching of the Gospel like the holy Apostles. Now, receive him, for we, too, have liked his teaching. Any one who wants to follow the footsteps of his teaching, from here or other regions, should not be prevented."

Then the king asked him to take money for himself. The saint said, "We do not want money, for the food for the day that our Lord has ordered is enough for us. But give it to the poor and the needy so that you may have a reward from God."[115] Then, (the king) let (the saint)go in peace. The king sent his soldiers with him to announce the proclamation in Sire, as was proclaimed at the camp of the king. The saint set out from the king's camp on 21 Yäkkatit, and came to his abode on 13 Miyazya.

Then a while later, the governor of Sire gathered all the monks in his governorship, as the king had ordered, such that there was a big assembly. Then those soldiers of the king announced their message, as they were ordered, saying, "Behold, (concerning) this monk whose teaching you disputed, saying that it was not good--to the extent that you had him brought to me--*now, behold, we recognized and ascertained that he is a faithful preacher of the Gospel and a partner of the holy Apostles. And those among you, who opposed him, behold, have been defeated by a righteous judgment. Now, if you can, do imitate (him) by following his footsteps. But if you cannot, do not prevent anyone who wants to follow him. As regards the belief in the Trinity and honoring the Sabbaths and the holy days, imitate him in action, as is ordained in the holy *Senodos*."

* p. 48

Many who wanted to dedicate themselves (to God) rejoiced at hearing this message. But those who were seduced by the weakness of their body despised the saint like the Egyptians who opposed the blessed Moses. They all went to their respective monasteries, wounded by the torment of

[115] Cf. Mat 6:4.

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jealousy. And the saint returned to his abode. The churches, which were under the teaching of the saint, lived in peace.

Then again after a certain time, another man became king over the country in place of the former. When those monks heard (this), their claws were roused; (they) made an appointment where all (the monks of) the monasteries would meet to unite against the blessed one. Thereupon they held a big assembly, in the absence of the governor of their district. There, they conspired and made a covenant among themselves not to salute any one who would learn the law of the holy Gospel from the words of the blessed Ǝsṭifanos, nor receive them in their hospices, nor purchase anything from the labor of the work of their hands. Lest they abandon this resolve, they bound it with an oath, *saying, "Let any one who abandons this covenant of ours be excommunicated, as the Devil was excommunicated from the community of the holy angels and as Judas was excommunicated from among the pure Apostles." This way they affirmed a curse on themselves. They appointed over them one spokesman to undertake speaking with the king on behalf of them all, and that they would pay the expense of his journey. They proclaimed nights of fasting[116] for all their monasteries in order that (the intent of) their counsel might be accomplished, associating themselves with Jezebel who ordered (a day of) fasting to kill Naboth the Jezreelite.[117]

* p. 49

Then they wrote to the king a letter of all lies, which would assure one to pursue the killing of the blessed one.[118] At the beginning of the letter of their lies, they put (a title) which reads, "A Letter of Light and a Letter of Darkness."[119] Completing every thing thus, they sent their document to the

[116] In contrast to Jezebel's "day of fasting," 1 Kings 21:9. - [117] 1 Kings 21:1-19. In the Gə'əz sources, Naboth is "an Israelite." - [118] Cf. Ps 108:17/109:16. - [119] This may be a veiled accusation that Zär'a Ya'əqob 's መጽሐፈ ብርሃን, which can mean "A Book of Light" or "An Epistle of Light," received its title from this ducument.

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king by the hand of the spokesman whom they had appointed over themselves.[120]

Then he[121] brought (it), and he delivered (it) to the king. The king read that letter and was impressed by its title. He questioned the one who had brought it to him; he said to him, "What is this which says 'A Letter of Light and a Letter of Darkness'?" Then he explained to him the thought in their mind. He said to him, "That they say 'The Letter of Darkness' is about Ǝsṭifanos who has become a metropolitan over our country, although no one has ordained him. And that they say 'The Letter of Light' is you who has become king for us, who will execute the counsel of the desire of our will." The king said to him, "I have heard about him, that his teaching and deeds are righteous and orthodox, and not as you say."

Then the king sent (a missive) to the saint, sweetening (his) words, saying, "Peace to you; I have heard *report about you, not just now but before I became king, that you are zealous for God. And now, do not delay coming to me for matters concerning my faith. For I long to meet you; I want to act rightly for God, (walking) in the footsteps of his law." To this, he added adjuration "in the name of God," lest he stay away. The blessed one did not want to go, but when the governors and those messengers urged him, with (great) difficulty, he gave them his consent. The saint said to his disciples, "Let us go again, lest it be a pretext for their malice, and not say, 'He refused us when we talked about religion and when we adjured (him) in the name of God.'"

* p. 50

Then on 2 Mäskäräm our father set out to go. On 5 Ṭəqəmt he arrived at the king's camp. After a little while, (the king) made him stand before him while he was with people; but he did not speak to him. He would do thus many times, not speaking to him. Again he summoned him, as before, and made him stand before him. He brought in all the chiefs of his

[120] This was *Abunä* Bärtälomewos who later joined the movement; see n. 166.
[121] Text, "They".

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army, and the monks, too. Then he started passing judgment, with diligence, on the affair of his kingdom. He gave an order that everyone pass sentence on the one with whom he was litigating. The governors, the priests and the monks passed a sentence of death. But the saint kept silence. The king said to him, "How about you, do you not pass sentence?" The blessed one said to him, "Indeed, I do not pass sentence." He said to him, "Why (not)?" The saint said to him, "Because it is forbidden for us, monks, to be involved in passing sentence in a judgment of the flesh.[122] I would have not come here either, * p. 51 but because you compelled me, saying *'that it was regarding the faith, which is of the spirit, and not for a judgment of the flesh.' However, for the rulers of the flesh, it is ordered that they judge according to the book of the Pentateuch and the book of Kings. Even that, it should not be like this but by a righteous sentence according to his law."

The king said to him, "When you became a monk did you abandon the book of the Pentateuch and the book of Kings?" The saint said to him, "I departed from the world, heeding the word of the Holy Gospel which says, 'Everyone who has given up houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, children and lands for my name's sake will receive a hundred-fold and inherit eternal life.'"[123] When the king heard the criticism of his judgment, he kept silent with anger.

Then after three weeks, he summoned him again and made him stand before him. He brought in all the monks and priests, and also those who were accusing the saint. Then he said to the saint, "Declare the reason for your coming." The saint answered, saying to him:

I came because you summoned me, saying that it is for matters of faith. However, may God give light to the eyes of your mind so that you may judge his people with righteousness, keeping yourself according to his law. And

[122] Cf. Arras, *Collectio,* p. 6. - [123] Mt 19:29.

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may he preserve you from the messengers of Satan about whom the prophet cried out, saying, "Woe to them who call the light darkness and the darkness light, who call the sweet bitter and the bitter sweet, who call the good evil and the evil good."[124] And now, O king, let not your kingship be for self glorification but make it for the service of the Lord God. For the scripture says, "The world was created by faith, by the word of God, and that which does not appear did appear."[125] And God, may his name be blessed, *having * p. 52 created the creatures thus, established the law for each according to which (each) lives--the spirituals in the spirit and those of the flesh in flesh. He commanded that they should not transgress what he had decreed. Those who transgressed his law, he delivered to the pain of condemnation. But to those who abide by practicing the law, he granted the privilege of living prosperously in the spirit and the flesh. Now, therefore, act rightly for God in all your dominions, remembering his judgment, for the scripture says, "He will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge nations and multiply corpses."[126]

Then the king said to the saint, "Why do you not agree with all the monks?" The saint replied, saying to him, "In order that I may not violate my covenant with the Lord. For in the beginning, the commandment of purity was given to Satan so that he might live in the delight of the light of life. But then by his own counsel, he conceived torment and brought forth sin and became Satan. And those who agreed with him became demons.[127] For to these monks was given the beauty of the light of the commandment of carrying the Gospel to follow the Son of God like the holy Apostles. But then they abandoned their covenant, and, behold, they returned to the world. So, I do not want to agree with them lest I become a demon, for the scripture says, 'An awful judgment and fire of wrath will consume the rebels.'"[128]

[124] Cf. Isa. 5:20. - [125] Heb 11:3. - [126] Ps 109/110:5-6. - [127] Grébaut, "Les Miracles," pp. 564-7. - [128] Unidentified, Jude 6-7?

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Then the king turned to the monks and said to them, "And you, why do you not agree with him?" They said to him, "Because he condemns the rule of our monasteries, introduces discord by (teaching) what our fathers did not teach, takes away our disciples, and contemns the prayer of Mary called
* p. 53 *Bartos*[129] and those that are like it. He says, 'Only *the *My soul magnifies God*[130] is Mary's prayer'" The king said to them, "Regarding this, are you willing to argue according to what is in the scripture?" They said to him, "No, let it be as you would say." They also said to him, "Also the fish that our fathers considered clean for eating, he declares unclean for us." The king said to the saint, "Do you say do not eat any (kinds of) fish?" The blessed one said to him, "What God has declared clean is clean; I say eat (it). And what God has declared unclean, which has neither fins nor scales, is unclean; I say do not eat (it)."[131] The king said to the accusers, "The witness of your fathers does not support you. Therefore, this (point) shall be as it is in the scripture." They became silent.

They also said to him, "He honors the seventh day, and he has violated Sunday;[132] he took a trip (on it)." The king said to the saint, "Do you act thus?" The saint replied, saying to him, "I do not violate the Sabbaths, for the seventh day is a memorial of the rest of God; and Sunday is (a memorial of) his holy resurrection. What they say, 'He took a trip,' is (because) I performed spiritual work, as Christ showed me, not work of the flesh, because these monks drove me out of my abode by means of the word of God, saying, 'We adjure you by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (and) by the body and blood of Christ, that you depart from our monastery.' Therefore, I was driven out for the sake of Christ, so that I might not resist with evil--not so as to indulge my flesh--for

[129] Basset, *Apocryphes*. - [130] I.e. *The Magnificat,* Cf. Lk 1:47-55. - [131] Cf. Lev 11:9-12; Deut 14:9-10. - [132] The pressure on Zär'a Ya'əqob to declare Saturday to be observed as a Sabbath seems to have come from several directions, not only from the Ewosṭatewosites, as is usually assumed. The Ǝsṭifanosites were observing Saturday as a Sabbath like the Ewosṭatewosites.

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thus has the Gospel commanded, saying, 'When they drive you out of this city, flee to another.'[133] Our Lord, too, traveled on the Sabbath when the Jews would persecute him, for he said, 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness for theirs is *the kingdom of heaven.'[134] The Apostle Paul, too, said, 'O our brethren, let us go forth, enduring the reproach (that) Christ (suffered), for such a sacrifice is pleasing to God.'"[135] The king said to him, "Do not act (thus) after this." The saint said to him, "In the past, I have not done any work of the flesh, and now, too, I will not. In the past, I have done work of the Spirit, and now, too, I will not give (it) up."

* p. 54

Then the king wanted the monks to praise him; he said to them, "Pass sentence." They passed sentence, saying, "He deserves death, because he is a violator of the Sabbath, and he does not obey the king, nor does he prostrate himself in his honor." Then the king ordered that they flog him. They bound him arms and legs and flogged him 46 times. The saint patiently accepted (it) without flinching, as though he were experiencing a massage. To the contrary, he praised God. That day was the feast day of the Apostle Philip, the 18th of Ḥədar.

Then when the saint stood up, the king said to him, "Do you think (what you received) is martyrdom?" The saint said to him, "Yes, indeed, it is martyrdom." The king said to him, "Let them ignite fire for you in order that you may enter (into it)." The saint said to him, "I will not order you to ignite (fire), but, behold, I am ready in the name of my God to accept whatever you offer." The king said to him, "You will not obtain martyrdom from me. There are many *arämi*[136] in your country." The saint said to him, "Many say, 'We are Christians,' even though they bring about martyrdom by killing the saints."

[133] Mt 10:23. - [134] Mt 5:10. - [135] Cf. Heb 13:13-16. - [136] Originally "Barbarians" but at this time the word was used for all non-Christians, including Muslims.

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* p. 55 *Then the king said to the saint, "Who is your teacher?" The blessed one said, "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." The king said to him, further, "And after (God)?" The blessed one said to him, "The Prophets and the Apostles." The king said to him, "After them?" The saint said to him, "Any one who abides by the ordinance of the Prophets and Apostles, whether great or small, I do not discriminate; all are my teachers." Again the king said to him, "And after this?" The blessed one replied, saying to him, "I do not have any other after this, for all are an army of Satan, a community of demons." The king said to him, "Is the Holy Spirit for you alone?" The blessed one said to him, "It is not for me alone. The Holy Spirit abides also in all who walk according to his law." (The king) kept silent when he heard this.

Then the saint said to the king, "Behold, my martyrdom is completed; have a peaceful day."[137] The king said, "Listen, all of you; his blood will be upon himself, if he leaves before I let him go." The blessed one said to him, "What do you want to happen?" He said to him, "That you wait until I organize a conference and arrange everything according to the law of the scriptures, as you have said." The saint said to him, "If you arrange everything according to the law of God, I will not go, for I will not (leave my) martyrdom incomplete; I will rather finish (it)" Then the king said to the monks, "Do you not refute him concerning what he says of you, 'Why do you return to the world after (giving your) oath and (making) a covenant with God?'?" They said to him, "Where should we go leaving the world? Are we to fly in the air? For our fathers arranged for us all this so that it might be a memorial for them. For you are our kings, the horns of the

* p. 56 altar,[138] *the fathers of our souls and our flesh." They thus flattered each other, as the scripture says, "And they will give presents to each other."[139]

[137] "Have a peaceful day" is said when taking leave, i.e. "Good-bye." - [138] Ps 117/118:27. - [139] Rev 11:10.

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Then after a little while, he let the monks go to their respective districts. But the saint remained in silence for two months. After that he sent the chamberlains to the king, saying, "You have not arranged what you said you would. Behold, you dismissed all who oppose the ordinance of the Gospel. If you do not want (this), dismiss us so that we may live according to our rule and by the labor of the work of our hands. If you do not want us to remain this way on your land, send us off to our wilderness. For the word of the Lord which said, 'Consider the birds of the sky,'[140] is enough for us. And if you do not want any of this, and if you have another intention, fulfill it for us now." They[141] reported this to the king. He said to them, "He seeks martyrdom by death at my hand; just tell him 'Return to your monastery.'" They dismissed him.

Then on 23 Ṭərr, the saint set out from the king's camp, and arrived at his abode on 29 Yäkkatit. He started visiting his disciples so that their life might be righteous in words as well as deeds until their hearts should agree with the scale of the canons that he ordained for them. He said to them,

> Take as booty now by the sweat of your labor, that with which you will help the poor, for laboring like this will not always be possible. For it is necessary that (such a time) should come, as the Lord has said, "For night is coming in which one who is in (this) world cannot work."[142] As for you, when you are doing this, fix your gaze *also on what lies ahead of you. For there will also be hereafter exile, imprisonment and even final martyrdom, as the Lord has said, "If they persecute me, they will persecute you also."[143] He also says, "But have faith in this and be strong (in believing), that I have overcome the world."[144] For this life of yours now is the way of the fathers. Lift up the eyes of your minds so that you may consider where they brought their ship into port (at) the completion of their (life), not to the former (life) but to the one that is higher, for the prophet

* p. 57

[140] Mt 6:26. - [141] The messengers. - [142] Jn 9: 4. - [143] Jn 15: 20. - [144] Cf. Jn 16:33.

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says about this, "If you recline at the table of lords, know that you, too, have to make an offering like them."[145] And our Lord makes us understand, saying (this), "I have told you this lest you err and stumble, for they will expel you from their synagogues."[146]

They, having been watered with this spring of life, the beauty of the ordinance was scented on them, receiving thus the life of angels.

Then they became many. Their abbeys were twinned from one to two, from two to three, being full and overflowing with the fruit of blessing outwardly and inwardly.[147] They hastened from their respective gardens to give the blessing from the sweat of their labors, placing (it) before the saint and before all the community to be distributed to the poor. The saint, receiving the blessing, came every morning, from the tranquility of his abode, after the 3rd hour (of the day), and spent the day at the gate of the monastery, distributing (the
* p. 58 blessing) to the poor and the needy. *He did like so until the 9th hour, without interruption except to offer prayer.

Also many came to him from districts near and far, seeking the healing of their sickness. Afterwards, delivered from their harmful disease by the imposition of the saint's hand, they would all thank God and say, "A great refuge has come to (our) land for the assistance of soul and body." Also many of the notables of the land joined his discipleship, including that head of the monks, who was appointed to be in charge of the speaking on behalf of all.[148] He, too, was included in enduring the abuse (directed) at the saint. Having been granted youthfulness along with the white hair of old age, he became partner with the saint in imprisonment, flogging and exile from city to city.

[145] Prov 23:1-2; - [146] Jn 16:1-2. - [147] I.e. materially and spiritually. - [148] This was *Abba* Bärtälomewos; see n. 166.

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Then jealousy increased further among the dignitaries of the land so that they disturbed the king, saying, "Behold, the name of Ǝsṭifanos has become exalted without your permission. The entire country has gone back to praising his teaching. He is fomenting a revolt that people should not prostrate themselves before you." With such words, many were seeking an error (in him) by which they would bring about the execution of the saint.

Then at that time, on a certain day, our holy father called his disciple, *Abunä* Gäbrä Krəstos, and with him that brother who followed (the saint) with him, and said to them, "This night a great mourning came upon me. It was as though I were seeing terrible lions. I also saw many monks, both those whom I know by name and also others. When *those monks * p. 59 saw those terrible lions, they were greatly afraid and were unable to approach them. They fled very far from their faces. But I approached them; and we greeted each other. There was concord among us in love, as one; many were with me. Then, after this, behold, I saw as though one lioness became separated from her companions and went alone. A great mourning took place at her departure between those who remained and herself. I cried. It seemed to me as though a mother had become separated from her children. As I was mourning in this manner, I woke up and found myself with my tears pouring on my bed. Do you think that this sign is about what is past or about what will come?" His disciple said to him, "I think it is about what is past." Our holy father said, "It is not about what is past but about what will come."

The saint continued speaking further and said, "Have you heard that many of the saints have been informed of the end of their (eternal) rest? But to me (the messengers of God) have not told it until now. Yet, I see on me (what is) more exalted than being informed of it: the gift of grace which God has allotted to me by his goodness, despite my unworthiness. So they have not informed me of my end." He said further, "Why do you think they have not informed me? It is because

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much combat and tribulation await me. For this reason, they did not tell me my end. But on this night, there came upon me a great weeping, as John the Evangelist has said to his disciple, 'Whether for death or for life it has not been revealed to me.'[149] It happened like that to me, too, today. But pray, for it is a
* p. 60 time of combat, for the Lord says, *'You shall hear of wars, fighting and rumors of war.'"[150]

Then after this event, without any delay, a message came from the king that all monks of the province of Təgray should assemble at Aksum to debate with the saint on the question of Mount Zion,[151] not seeking to profit from the teaching of the law but to quarrel about a matter that they themselves had invented. Accordingly, when an attendant reached the saint, he told him the king's message, that he should go there and debate about this matter. The saint, knowing the malice of the accusers, that it was they who thought up this matter, said to the attendant, "I will not go. I do not want to labor for a vain matter. If they want what is of the spirit, let them follow the path of the Gospel so that they may understand the mystery of Mount Zion. But if they are looking for idle talk, behold, they have their companions at the king's palace, boasting about clothes of honor. Seeing the kingdom of the spirit, however, is not by talk but by deeds."

That messenger of the king went and told this to those accusers--the heads of that conference. They were very angry because their wicked counsel, which they schemed against the saint, was frustrated. Then they took counsel; some went to the king with that attendant to make accusation; some made an appointment to ransack the abbey of the saint and to put his disciples in irons, for the chief would want it so.

* p. 61 *As for the king, he sent his attendant to the saint again, saying, "Come to me so that we may discuss here

[149] Budge, *Contendings*, p. 191. - [150] A conflation of Mt. 24:6 and Mk. 13:7. - [151] See the introduction for a brief discussion of this issue.

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religious matters." He also gave an order to the governor of Sire to send the saint forcibly. While these were hastening our father, those monks also surrounded one monastery of the abbeys of the saint and ransacked (it), like the nomads do, taking all their labor, sparing nothing, even that which they had prepared for the bread of the Eucharist. They pulled off their clothes, beat them, and bound them. But the saint's disciples became like the sheep in the midst of wolves, making no opposition at all but rather praising God, because He had assigned them such a lot. When that governor heard, he went there with that attendant of the king, and made them stop by force. Regarding the violence they had used, no one brought any charge against them for they knew the heart of the monarch.

Then on 30 Ḫədar, the saint set out to go; he arrived at the king's camp on 10 Ṭərr. And that old man, *Abba* Bärtälomewos was with him. Although aware of their arrival, the king did not want to have them come to him. He only had his soldiers mingle with them to have an eye on them like prisoners, without giving them any food. He wanted to take revenge on them this way.

Then later, on 7 Miyazya, he summoned them near himself, but without letting them inside to his presence. The king sent the chamberlains to the saint, saying, "I have heard--*they told me--that you say there is no Mount Zion, and also that you bring *arämi* into your church. I have also heard that you offer the oblation on wood. Is it true or false?" The saint said to the messengers, "Tell him (that) I do not say that there is no Mount Zion; for those who have cleansed their hearts and have carried the yoke of the Gospel of Christ will find it. As to what he has said about bringing *arämi* (into church), tell him, let alone the *arämi*, even those who say (they are) Christian with their mouth, we will not let to take part in our sacrifice, unless they walk in the path of his law. As to what he said, (that I) offer the oblation on wood, tell him, 'Yes, I have

* p. 62

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advised my brothers to do (so), for I have not found in the scriptures (a passage) which says that one should not do (it) on wood, for it was wood on which Christ was crucified. He sanctified the wood of the cross with his blood;[152] and it is wood, anointed with the holy chrism,[153] that is made into a *tabot*.[154] But whoever wants to offer it on gold and silver, I do not oppose him."

These chamberlains told the king thus. He again sent them, saying, "This is good, but swear that you do not have a faith other than such as this." The saint said to them, "Tell him that if people doubt (the genuineness of) gold, they try it with fire. It is the same with people, too: if they doubt him, they try him with the word of God, in the scriptures, and his deeds are investigated, because the Gospel says that a tree is known by its fruit.[155] Regarding what he has said about swearing, tell him that I will not swear even to (escape) death, because the Gospel has commanded that we should not swear neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by our head or by any
* p. 63 other oath but to say yes or no."[156] *They told the king so. The king sent to him again, saying, "This, too, is good. Then say yes, as you have said."

The saint said to them, "This is my faith: The Father is the begetter, the Son is the begotten, (and) the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. I prostrate myself before this, and worship this (Trinity). I will not add to this, intending that kings of the earth should like me. Also I will not take away from this either, intending that kings of the earth should not hate me. Yes, yes, according to the words of the Gospel." They told the king thus. Not finding what to say, he again kept him as before.

Then waiting some time after this, he summoned them and had them stand before him. They greeted him, saying,

[152] Zär'a Ya'əqob was not satisfied with this stand of the Ǝsṭifanosites regarding the Holy Cross. He wanted Christians to prostrate themselves to the ground before it.
[153] Holy oil. - [154] The tablet on which the Eucharist is broken. - [155] Cf. Mt 7:16. - [156] Cf. Mt 5: 34-37.

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"Peace to you," according to the commandment.[157] Then his soldiers shouted, saying, "Prostrate yourselves; prostrate yourselves." They went on for a while like this, shouting and moving here and there, in order to cause fear. The king ordered that they be silent and turned to matters of concern for his kingdom. He did not speak to them regarding why he had summoned them. When it was evening, he ordered that they should depart. He again kept them as before in silence.

The saint said to his disciples, "Get up; let us go to our wilderness. For our business is not guarding the gate of kings." On 8 Säne, they set out to go. That attendant who was keeping an eye on them ran and told the general of the army, and the latter told the king. (The king) gave orders to bring them (back). His soldiers went and brought them back treating them kindly. The king ordered (them) to make them stand before him. He summoned the metropolitans, too, and seated them with himself. The saint greeted the king as he was accustomed to do. And with him was that holy old man.[158] Then the saint said to the king, "Was it right (to act) thus? Why did you summon us from our abodes forcibly? And when we came *here, you did not give us (our) daily meal, nor dismiss us so that we might live by the labor of our hands. Why do you forsake God's justice, giving preference to your own pleasure? Does not the scripture say, 'Blessed are those who observe justice'?[159] You, too, if you judge according to God's justice, you will receive favor before God. But if you ignore God's justice like this, giving preference to an ephemeral praise, with which money lovers glorify you with flattery, saying, 'Who is like you!' It will not be so. Behold, there is God, the righteous judge, who does not forget the cry of the poor but 'judges in favor of all the oppressed.'"[160]

* p. 64

[157] Cf. Mt 10:12. - [158] Definitely *Abba* Bärtälomewos; see n. 166. - [159] Ps 105/106:3. [160] Ps 145/146:7.

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The king said to the saint, "How great are you that you talk to me with (such) audacity? Are you a metropolitan or a bishop? If they should (wish to) to speak to me, behold they are here. For your pride, that we hear and see, is as great as the sky and earth." The saint said to him, "What is my audacity with which I insulted you? Did I not speak to you (about) the law which God has ordained? If you do not want me to speak to you, why did you summon me to come here? For it is not right for a monk to come here, if he does not say what is right. I, too, would have not come, were I not to speak the truth." The king said to him, "If you had said I will not come, would they have not brought you, holding you by the throat?" The saint said to him, "Have you not heard what the book of the fathers has said, 'There is nothing better for a monk than hoping for death and crucifixion.'[161] Is it by the power of the flesh that I oppose you? Rather it is relying on the power of my God (that I opposed you), even to the extent of incurring beheading?"

Then the king said to the saint, "Why do you not lower your head in prostration?" The saint said to him, "There is no
* p. 65 *commandment in the law that we should prostrate ourselves, as you say, but it does command us to prostrate ourselves before God. At any rate, do not seek prostration from us; prayer and blessing would be enough for you." The king said to him, "Why do you always address me with 'thou'?"[162] The saint said, "Why should I not address you (thus)? Are you not a single person? For it is written so in the Old and New Testaments, that they address a single person as single, not as plural. Not only man, even God, we invoke thus, saying, 'Thou forsake me not, O Lord. O my God, be thou not far from me. See thou into my help.'"[163]

Then as he was speaking thus, the king gave an order that they beat him on his mouth, and roared with rage. They

[161] Arras, *Patericon*, p. 125. - [162] The informal *antä*, which is the singular pronoun, as French "*toi*," or German "*Du*," as against "*vous*," or "*Sie*," respectively. - [163] Cf. Ps 37/38:21-23: "Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation."

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beat the saint raising his chin up, until blood filled his entirety. When the soldiers of the king, of the right and left, saw (this) they pressed on the saint, beating him from his head to his feet. They surrounded him like bees on honey.[164] When his body was not enough for them, they took turns among themselves, some taking over from others, until the beauty of his appearance was changed and became like wood grilled with fire, because the breadth of his cheeks and the level of his lips became equal to the tip of his nose, because of the swelling from the beating. And his eye(s) could not see. Just (that) his blood was dripping like water at the door of his tent.

Then when (the king) had breathed out his rage, he ordered (them) to remove him from his presence. They took him to his prison house.[165] The disciples of the saint who were standing with him *wanted to follow to where they would take him. The king ordered that they hold and slap each of them. Then he said to that old man, "And you, Bärtälomewos,[166] knowing the honor of our house, how can you contemn it like this?" The old man said, "Yes, I, too, want to imitate this saint in every thing." Him, too, he ordered that they slap. Because of the severity of first slapping, he said, "I was unaware of those that came afterwards."

* p. 66

Then he gave orders that they flog all of them, including the old man. The metropolitans who were sitting on his right and left were unable to speak to the king because of the severity of his rage. Then after they made them lie down for flogging, he ordered that they leave them. They brought the saint back from where they had taken him, walking bent over, because the blood from his nose and mouth, which had flowed

[164] Cf. Ps 117/118:12. - [165] Lit. "storehouse," but there is no doubt that it was prison or a place of banishment situated in the hamlet of Gʷənṣ; see n. 188 below.
[166] Bärtälomewos was a respected abbot of a famous monastery. It may be remembered that when Abbot Samu'el locked Abba Ǝsṭifanos in jail in the monastery, his followers went to Abbot Bärtälomewos seeking his intervention, Conti Rossini, *Abakerazun*, p. 10.

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on his beard, had become like a rope when it coagulated, and stuck to his clothes, not breaking off. His head was bare because they had let his cap fall off when they beat him, but it was dangling, held by the hooks of his garment. His disciples attended (to him); they placed a cap on his head and removed the rope of blood from his beard. Regarding (the sight of) his eye(s), they were unable to tell whether it was lost or not.

The saint said to his disciples, "Are you, indeed, saddened by this? Not only this beating, (but) even if they had scattered all my bones for the sake of Christ, I would, indeed, rejoice. But *you, be steadfast in God. If they separate me from you, exhort one another with your brethren 'and give preference to the teaching of your hope'[167] so that you may obtain that which the world cannot rob from you."

* p. 67

While the saint was admonishing them thus, even though he was weak with pain, the soldiers of the king came and isolated each, as they were ordered, and handed them over the officers of his army to put them in irons. They kept them in shackles in the central quarter of his encampment. Then a week later, the king gave an order that they release them from their shackles. They all met with the saint (and) each other. The king gave an order to his attendant, who had kept an eye on them before, that he should again watch over them in the same way.

While they were thus in detention, the saint fell ill of a grave illness such that he was unable to go out and return. He did not even rise from his bed, but his disciples would carry him like a child when taking (him) out and in. Because of the gravity of his illness, he always conversed about the sufferings of Job and exercised his patience, thanking God in everything. He also interpreted the mysteries of his prophecy. Although he was bedridden in sickness, he was the sustenance of joy to those who were with him, while he was engaged in the breaking the bread of the spirit.

[167] Heb 12:5.

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Then one day, as he was in his suffering, the saint said to *Abunä* Gäbrä Krəstos and the brother who was with him, "This illness of mine resembles the temptation of the enemy which happened to me at the time of my seclusion from people. I wonder, therefore, whether along with these beatings by men (there may be happening) what he said to me, 'I will come against you in a way you will not understand.' Also, many people *said, 'The blood of his beatings being squeezed out made him sick like this.'"[168]

* p. 68

Then while the saint was in this (condition), the king sent a message that they bring the saint to him. They took him, carrying him, and seated him near him. He sent to him, saying, "Peace to you; how are you? For I have heard that you have become sick. May God now have mercy on you. As regard to the matter on which we quarreled before, do not be sad. I have forgiven that which has passed and that which may happen from now on." The saint said to those whom he had sent, "Tell him: 'Thanks be to God that he has reminded you of this. May he further enlighten your heart so that you may execute his commandment.'" Then the king gave an order that they give him an abode near him. From then on, he sent them bread for their sustenance.

After a year had elapsed from the time when he had brought them from their monastery, he bade him farewell by a message, saying, "May God bless your monasticism, your labor and your monasteries. Boasting by man is truly ephemeral, as you have said. Now, boast by God; and return to your monasteries." The torment of his illness left the saint, and he started gradually to walk in going out of, and returning to, his abode. But from that time until he completed his martyrdom, he was unable to take a long trip. They prepared a

[168] See, pp. 14-15. The point to be made is that in both cases he was afflicted with pain, the first time directly by Satan and this time indirectly through people. Pain is the enemy's temptation, and endurance the enemy's defeat. The subject is most probably the tempter: "(The tempter) pained him thus squeezing the blood of his beating."

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chair on which to carry him. Then on 28 Taḫśaś, they set out from the king's camp, and on 3 Yäkkatit, they returned to their abodes.

* p. 69 *Then after a little while, those accusers became upset again and they upset the king, too, saying, "If you let these (people) go on like this, all will follow in their footsteps. And there will be none who will prostrate himself before the power of your kingship." Then the king gave an order that they exile our holy father and that *Abunä* Bärtälomewos from their monasteries to a town called Däbrä Ma'əẓo[169] and that they flog them, each 40 times.

Then the messenger of the king came to the saint and said to him, "Peace to you, says the king to you." The saint said to him, "May the peace of the Lord be with him." He said to him, "But prostrate yourself to the king." The saint said to him, "I do not prostrate myself to anyone other than to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Then this messenger gave an order that they put the saint in irons. They took him out of his monastery, as they had been ordered. They also brought that old holy man in irons. Putting the two together they took them to Däbrä Ma'əẓo. On 28 Ṭərr they brought them to *the cave called Cell of Afḥarom.*[170] At that time, they gave an order that all the people of the town should assemble. Thereupon they flogged each of them 40 times. The next day they took them up to its monastery and put them there in irons.

Then after three months, the king sent his attendant to them, saying, "I have done this saying that I should not forsake what my fathers transmitted to me. Do not be upset with me. I have now forsaken (it); I have given you clemency; come down." They undid their chains from them. The saints came
* p. 70 down from there *to return to their asceticism. When they

[169] Varenbergh, "Studien," p. 13: Däbrä Maḫəẓo. - [170] "The Cave/Cell of Afḥarom," only in N, in an eighteenth-century hand.

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reached the city of Aksum, another messenger of the king came again to the saints and said to them, "Peace to you, says the king." They returned to him the salutation, as was meet. He said to them, "Therefore, prostrate yourselves!" The saint said to him, "What were all these floggings and exilings that were inflicted on us for? Were they not because of this? After he has said, 'I have given you clemency,' now what do you want? Are you just laughing at us or do you think we are afraid of dying for the sake of God? Now, we do not prostrate ourselves to anyone except to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".

Then he told them his message, saying: "If God had not made me king I would not be king. Now, abandon this affair. If you refuse, from now on, your blood is on your head." The saint said to him, "His blood is rather on his head; for he is not quarreling with us for the sake of the law of God, neither for adding (to it) nor taking away (from it). Rather, he is quarreling with us for the sake of the tradition of his fathers. If he abandons (it), let him abandon (it). But if he refuses to abandon (it), we, too, do not hesitate to die for the sake of the law of our God." Then that messenger handed over the saints to the governor so that he might keep them in custody, and not let them go elsewhere until they should have done what they wanted from them. They kept them there for three years.

The disciples of the saint were visiting him daily from their abbeys in order to reinforce[171] the strength of their soul, competing among themselves. Sometimes they would come back *having drawn from the font of life into the pitcher of their heart. Sometimes they would set out to go there in rush like bees that hasten to fly to gather (the nectar of) the flowers during spring, before the heat of summer comes; they, too, were similarly hastening to comfort him in order to harvest their benefit before those who were opening their mouths against him[172] should take him away from them. Subsequently

* p. 71

[171] Or "receive peace for" or "strengthen" . - [172] Cf. Ps 108/109:2.

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many were added to the following of our holy father, preached to them at each of his banishments. Also among pious women, too, there were nuns who courageously persevered in their nunnery in the rule of our holy father's teaching.

Then when the king realized that it was near (enough) for his disciples to visit their father and that those who were following his footsteps were many, he said, "Behold, he squeezes out the provinces (of my kingdom) by the tenor of his teaching." So he ordered that they banish him from where he was dwelling, removing him far away elsewhere. As they were taking him away, one of the accusers met him on the road and said to the saint, "Why do you not prostrate yourself before the king?" The saint answered and said to him, "I do not make a quaternity (of God), for I have subjected myself to the Holy Trinity." The man said to him, further, "If you do not prostrate yourself before the king, in whose land are you living then?" The saint said to him, "The Church is built on the holy Apostles, not on the kings of the earth. I am living, therefore, in holy Church, where Christ has built for us, (a house) which waves cannot shake."[173]

* p. 72

*When this accuser heard this, he ran in haste and told this to the king, adding lies from the spirit of his teacher.[174] Then the king sent one of his soldiers, who shared in his point of view, to the saints, and ordered him to breathe out his roar of rage. This messenger of the king gathered the governors of the district with many troops. Armed with weapons, they arrived on the day of Epiphany, the feast day of the holy Baptism, while they were gathered in the hall of instruction, reading the book of the holy Pentateuch about the departure of the children of Israel (from Egypt), and the saint interpreting for them, as he was accustomed.

This messenger arrived and addressed the saint with deceptive words, hiding the malice of his sudden coming, until the people whom he had appointed for his help reached him.

[173] Cf. Mt 7:24-27; 16:18. - [174] I.e. Satan, "the father of lies," cf. Jn 8:44.

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When the malice of his deception was no longer hidden, he started beating, sparing no one. He struck our holy father a heavy blow, not reverencing the beauty of his life, scented (and) anointed with ointment of the Spirit. He took no account either of the emaciation of his limbs, that had become stuck by enduring the sufferings that were (attributable) to carnal (men) and demons. For the two of them are allies in waging war on the saints. Furthermore, he throttled that old holy man and threw him on the ground so that he almost died. He beat all of them with a rod, as they beat the sheaves on threshing floor, so that their blood flowed on the ground like water. They collected much wood and set it on fire and threatened *to put the saints into the fire. When he saw that they were ready to enter (into the fire), he stopped them. Then he set on fire the saint's chair with which they carried him to all his exiles, and also his mat on which he slept.

* p. 73

Also the spokesman of the governor came with a large army, having them blow a trumpet. The messenger shouted at them that they should help him. They beat the saints again, each with a club, until those who were beating (them) were exhausted. When it was evening, they gathered them all in one (place). They bound the saint with an iron collar;[175] they did the same to the old man, too. On the next day, he ordered that they bring them near. He said to our holy father, "Prostrate yourself before the king." The blessed one said to him, "I do not obey you." He threw him in anger to the ground, and beat him with a rod and a club. Then he tried to force each of them to prostrate to the ground. When they, too, disobeyed him, like their father, he beat them until their blood flowed like the previous day. They bound all of them with iron collars.[175] Then he burned down the abode of the saint and took away all (the fruit of) their labor. They also seized their clothes.

Then on 12 Ṭərr, he made them depart. When the saint could not walk, he had him carried on a chair. On 8 Yäkkatit,

[175] *wäskämt*.

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he brought them to the governor of Təgray, when he was at ʻAṣäla. This messenger told the governor the command of the king, that he torture the saints as he had commanded. They took the saint down from his sickbed, and made him stand before the governor. They indicated to him the folly of their deviation (from the king's command), commanding him, with a threat, to prostrate himself. Thereupon *the saint answered them with the word of the law, saying, "It is written that one should not prostrate oneself before any other than God alone."[176] When that messenger saw that the saint's words would win over people's hearts, he prevented him from talking. They made him lie down in haste and flogged him 15 times. Then they beat all the saints with the rod, until they shed their blood like water, especially *Abunä* Gäbrä Krəstos, such that they brought him to (the point of) dying; but God raised him for us so that he might report to us the story of this memorial.[177]

* p. 74

Then they lifted up the saint and secured him on a mule and made him go round, here and there, inside the wall of the governor's (compound). The messenger mocked him, saying, "Behold, your vow has been abrogated." But the saint, not holding the rein of the mule, but rather stretching out his hands to heaven, said, "Let Satan and all his host be put to shame. I have renounced the world." Some of them said, "If he travels in this (condition), he will die on the road. If the king wants to see him, let them carry him as before." They took him down from the mule and made arrangements for carrying him. They put chains on his right and left (hands) and an iron collar on his neck. For his disciples, they made collars of ploughs and yokes and chained (every) two of them to one collar and led them away in agony. They were also sheding their blood in the road and in market places. After that, they dispersed his disciples among the troops that were there, in order that they might keep

[176] Cf. Ex 5:10. - [177] The "memorial" is this *gädl*. This tells us that *Abunä* Gäbrä Krəstos was its author, a claim which is confirmed in Schneider MS 63, f. 32b.

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them *in irons. But the saint, they led away in haste with four brothers who would attend him. * p. 75

Then on 25 Yäkkatit, they brought him to the king's camp. (The king) kept him for three months without having him stand in his presence, sending (missives) to the saint by way of deception so that he might glorify him by prostrating himself, like that son of Kish[178] who sought praise from the prophet even adding the tearing of his priestly robe.

Then when the king realized that he would not obey him, he ordered his soldiers to search the vesture of the saint's monastic habit and of those of his disciples, thinking they might have talisman(s) with which they were alleviating the torture. Thereupon they untied their girdles and turned all their caps inside out, as well as the entire arrangement of their monastic habit. They did not find anything to say.

Then on 18 Gənbot, the king gathered an assembly. He ordered that they bring the saint; and they made him stand with his disciples in his presence. Then the king sent to the saint, saying, "What is the reason for this pride of yours and your boast, that you say, I do not do like people, your peers? Have not the ancients, too, done it? Abraham prostrated himself before the children of Emor,[179] and Jacob before Esau.[180] And many others also have done it. Why are you too proud to do it?"

The saint said to those whom he sent, "Tell him (this): What is all this? The argument that says 'Many have done it' is weak. For greater than the deeds of many is the witness *of God's word, which says, 'Heaven and earth will pass but my word will not pass.'[181] For previously, he commanded us in the Torah by his words that we should not prostrate ourselves before any other but before him only.[182] And in the New Testament he showed us openly by his deeds and ordered us * p. 76

[178] I.e. Saul, cf. 1 Sam 15:24-27; and 19:23-24. - [179] Gen 23:7; Jub 17:30. - [180] Gen 33:3. - [181] Mt 24:35. - [182] Cf. Ex 20:4-5.

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similarly to follow his footsteps. And now, if you can submit to his law, let it be for us and you, too, as he has decreed. But if you do not want (to do) thus, the Lord himself has said, 'A servant cannot serve two masters.'[183] We have put ourselves in the service of the Holy Trinity. (Therefore,) we cannot now put ourselves in the service of anyone else." They[184] told him thus.

(The king) commanded in anger that they flog him. They tore his garment, the monastic habit which is a symbol of the purity of Mary. They tied his arms and legs and flogged him 70 times while he thanked God patiently, without flinching. They flogged his disciples, too, similarly. The king said to his attendant, "Brand his arms, for he has said to me, 'I am not your slave.' Show him[185] now to be my slave. Brand him in big (letters), and (the arms) of his disciples in the same way." They slashed his arms with a razor. When they slashed him, there was no drop of blood; it was just as though they torn skin without flesh. They slashed the arms of his disciples, too. Then he ordered that they separate his disciples from him and banish them to the province of Efat.[186] They completed their martyrdom there.

The saint, however, he banished alone to the province of Gʷatr. He gave an order that they shut him up in a prison.[187] Then they brought him to Gʷatr on the first of Säne. They tied his arms and legs with irons and shut him up in a jail in a city
* p. 77 *called Wazərma. After they had imprisoned the saint, the king sent also (a missive) to the disciples of the saint who were living in their abbeys, saying, "Behold, your teacher Ǝsṭifanos was violating every tradition of the honor of our kingship. And now, if you submit to the law of my kingship, like other monks who obey my words, live as you are. But if you do not act like this, depart from my country."

[183] Mt 6:24. - [184] The messengers. - [185] Or "I will show him." They were branded with the letter ዘ, the initial of his name ዘርአ ያዕቆብ, EMML 4, f. 73b, Macomber, *Catalogue* I, p. 7. - [186] Efat, which was then an Islamic principality, is today's Yifat. - [187] The use of the Arabic word "*ḥabs*," for prison, as opposed to Gəʿəz "*moqəḥ*," indicates that, at that time, there was, indeed, a strong Arabic culture in this region.

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The messenger of the king arrived and spoke thus to his disciples. They answered him unanimously, saying, "Our father Ǝsṭifanos has followed Christ as the Gospel has commanded. Similarly, we, too, follow our father in whatever he taught us. We do not seek anything else." They banished them from their abbeys, as they were ordered. They plundered all (the fruit of) their labor. The disciples of the saint fled to the wilderness and to places which God had prepared for them to be kept. For such is the law of the bride of Christ in this world.

Then that messenger took *Abunä* Gäbrä Krəstos with one brother, as he was ordered, and brought them to the king. The king sent to them, saying, "What is this pride of yours, that you say, 'We do not forsake (the teaching of) our father'? You also say, 'We shall convert others to our teaching.' Now, your father is a dog and you are dogs, horsemen of Satan. Why do you not act like everyone?" Our holy *father responded to them, saying, "Because God has not commanded us to act in the manner of everyone, but has given us an ordinance, saying, 'Keep my law and my commandment.' Thus, our father has obeyed him, keeping his law. And we, too, will not deviate from the footsteps of our father, neither to the right nor to the left." When the king heard this, he ordered that they flog them. After they had flogged them, they threw them into the *ruminating place of officers' cud.*[188] As for our father Saint Ǝsṭifanos, he remained incarcerated in the prison six more months.

* p. 78

Then in the seventh month, on 18 Taḫśaś, the guards heard him calling three times, saying, "Christ." He said this and was silent. At that moment great dread and an earthquake

[188] Most likely a narrow gorge, in a town near the river Käsäm, called Gʷənṣ/ Gʷənṭ, where, as punishment, offenders were put to be tortured. It is mentioned in several sources as a place of punishment during the reign of 'Amdä Ṣəyon, Na'od, Zär'a Ya'əqob and Bä'ədä Maryam; see Kur, *Samuel*, p. 10; Conti Rossini, *Abakerazun*, p. 25; and Perruchon, *Les Chroniques*, p. 129. They call the name of the prison house *betä mäzagəbt*, see f. 90a; Conti Rossini, *loc cit.*; and Caquot, "Ezrā," p. 87.

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happened in that place, such that the people of the city understood that he had completed (his martyrdom). Because of (their) terror, they were unable to come near that house where the saint had been. For when he was alive, he had commanded those Muslims, saying, "When I finish (my martyrdom by) dying, do not touch my body until the Lord sends (some one) from among the Christians who will shroud my body."

So, they searched and found a certain Christian. They hired him for him to enter and inspect him. This man opened (the door) and entered. He found the saint lying on the ground, thus completing (his martyrdom), with the saint's hands covering his lips and eyes together. He found the bonds, which had been on his arms and legs apart, moved away from his
* p. 79 body.[189] Thereupon the *man came out trembling from fear of the dreadful event that had taken place. He closed the door of the house, and told the guards that he had finished dying.

They sent to the governor of the province to ask him about his burial, whether he would order that it be there or if not that it be elsewhere. The Christians of the vicinity of that province heard and visited (the place) to bury him. But the guards did not allow them because they were waiting for the governor's order. Then a week later, the messenger returned, saying, "Bury (him) here." There was a certain deacon who had been constantly visiting (the place) ever since the saint had completed his martyrdom, desiring to bury his body. Then the guards allowed that deacon to bury him, as he wanted. On 24 Taḫśaś, he shrouded him, as was proper, and buried him in a quiet place outside of the city. May his prayer and blessing and his supplication be with us forever (and) ever. Amen.

Then after a little while, the disciples of the saint heard that their father had completed his martyrdom. They hastened to

[189] An allusion to what happened to the chains with which St. Peter was shackled; cf. Acts 12:7.

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rush from the province where they were living and came to that city. They understood where his tomb was. On the dawning of the day of 3 Mäggabit, they took away the body of the saint by night. Subsequently as they were taking him in the direction of Təgray, (soldiers) arrested them on the road, in the district where the gate of Gədəm was, and brought them to the governor of the province. The governor gave an order to keep them under arrest. As for the corpse of the saint, they placed it in *a church. Then the governor sent to the king about this matter, that the disciples of the saint had been found taking away the body of their father. * p. 80

When the king heard (this), he was very angry. He gave an order that they bring (to him) those who had been arrested taking away the body of their teacher and also the others, whose imprisonment with their father had taken place earlier and were living under (house arrest) by the governor of Təgray. He ordered that they make all of them stand together in his presence. Thereupon he began to argue with them the issue on which their father had striven, ordering them to prostrate themselves before him. They, too, refused him, saying, "We do not prostrate ourselves before any other than the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Such is the law of God we have learned from our father. We cannot add to this nor subtract from this, but (must do) as we had been taught."

Thereupon when he was unable to make them agree, he gave an order that they flog them. They flogged them until their blood flowed on the ground like water. Then he gave an order that they disperse them, each one in cities of Muslims, and that they torment them with the affliction of irons. His soldiers did as he had ordered them. As for the body of the saint, he ordered that they bury it. Then on 22 Ṭəqəmt, in the eighth month after his disciples had taken him from the district of G^{w}atr, they buried him in (the compound of) a church in the land of Gədəm.

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After this the king sent his soldiers to the districts of Təgray and to others, ordering them to gather to him the disciples of the saint from everywhere that they might find (them). His soldiers brought (them) to him, as he had ordered them. The
* p. 81 king toiled *at torturing them from time to time. When he was unable to defeat them, he became angry with this (saint) who had completed (his martyrdom), the messenger of Christ, Father Ǝsṭifanos, saying (in worry), "The preaching of his teaching has thus taken root!"

Furthermore, it was reported that the sick who visited his tomb were finding healing. Because of all this, his heart became hot and was burnt in anger, such that he ordered that they exhume the body of the saint from the tomb and bring (it) to him. Thereupon two years after he had completed his martyrdom, they exhumed him from the tomb on 2 Ṭərr and took him to the king. They brought him there and placed him in a church near his camp. Then when they removed his burial cloths, they found his body unchanged from its previous (condition). It looked as though just then fallen asleep.

Then after three months, the king ordered again that they took him to the province of Däwwaro, to a city called Ṣakra, because there was there the cemetry of the Muslims of the governor of ʿAdäl, and because the latter resisted the king, and they waged war against each other in the tradition of the flesh. But this saint, our father Ǝsṭifanos, the messenger of Christ, resisted the world with the sword of faith, being a witness to the Kingdom of Christ, as it is written, saying, "May all the ends of the earth remember and turn to God. And may all lands of nations prostrate themselves before him, for kingship belongs to God."[190] Because of this, the king was angry, and made such an envoy of Christ the equal of this corrupt lackey of brigands.

[190] Cf. Ps 21: 28-29/22: 27-28.

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*Then during the time of Passion of the Only-Begotten, they took the body of the saint here, and brought it to Ṣakra on the day of Crucifixion of Our Lord, Good Friday. On the next day, Saturday, which was the vigil of Easter, 13 Miyazya, the people of the district gathered, by the order of the king, at that cemetry of the Muslims. This messenger placed the body of the saint before them. Then he told them the message of the king, saying, "This man was a rebel. He used to seduce all provinces to his teaching. His entire manner of life was like that of these Muslims. His name was Ǝsṭifanos. Now take his body and burn it with fire." It was two years and four months from the time the saint had completed his martyrdom to that day. They brought much wood and kindled fire on his body. They became exhausted from burning (it); they spent the day thus until evening. Afterwards they gathered many rocks and piled (them) on him and left him thus. May his prayer and blessing be with us forever. Amen. * p. 82

The king again exerted his power in torturing the disciples of the saint, desiring to leave none in his dominion, such that he oppressed them and made those years like nights. But Christ helped them by the mystery of his light, as it is written, saying, "The night, too, is bright like the day. Its light is as great as its darkness."[191] Then after he had tortured them, he scattered them *among the districts of the Muslims, toward the eastern part of his kingdom, where it is all a source of wars and captivities. They used to torture them there with irons, chiseled trunk, and log. Furthermore, in mocking them, they would take off the clothes of their monastic habit, to make them nude. They would spread dirt on them. Also instead of cutting it they would pull out the hair of their heads; they would beat them with rod, without any compassion; and they would pierce their bodies with the tip of the spear. Many completed their martyrdom while they tortured them by such action(s). * p. 83

[191] Ps 138/139:12.

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Likewise *Abunä* Gäbrä Krəstos spent 3 years with his legs bound. Then he completed his martyrdom on 2 Mäggabit. May the blessing of his prayer and that of all his brothers be with us forever and ever. Amen.

* p. 84 *Then after years and ages since (the time when) they burned the body of the saint, God called the brothers. They arrived at that place where they had burned the body of the saint. When they removed the rocks, God revealed to them the bones of the saint, together with the clothes of his monastic habit and shroud, God showing the mystery of his protection so that it might be a boast to those who follow his footsteps. They carried it off on 25 Säne and hid it in the place that God willed (for it).[192] May his prayer, petition and the gift of the assistance of this combatant *Abunä* Ǝsṭifanos be with us forever and ever. Amen.

On him who copies (this *gädl*), on him who commissions its copying, on him who reads it, and on him who hears its words with faith, may God have mercy upon us all, forever and ever. Amen.

Forgive and bless me.

[192] An allusion to the burial site of Moses; cf. how "he longed to obtain the grace that Moses was granted," p. 1.

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